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SIXTEEN FAMOUS
AMERICAN PLAYS

*With an Introduction by
Brooks Atkinson*



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NEW YORK

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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FOREWORD

The selection of sixteen modern American plays for an anthology must necessarily be arbitrary. Limitation of space prevented the inclusion of a score of plays that had as obvious claims for recognition as those that were chosen. Granted the fact that we could include only sixteen, we exercised our personal preferences. Fortunately, we secured permission to reprint every play that we wanted, and owe a debt of genuine gratitude to the playwrights and publishers for their courtesy—particularly to those concerned with resounding successes that are still playing to capacity audiences on Broadway and on tour.

The sixteen plays in this collection have many things in common. All of them are products of the past two fruitful decades in the American theatre. All of them are by native playwrights and are concerned with native themes. All of them were outstanding commercial successes, and most of them will continue to be played by professional and amateur groups for many years to come. Three of them are Pulitzer Prize winners.

The plays are arranged chronologically, in the order of their original presentation on the Broadway stage. The texts in every case are complete and unabridged. No two plays are by the same author. And the selection was purposely made to cover as wide a variety of themes as possible—the open spaces, Hollywood Park Avenue, the small towns and the big ones, rich people and poor. The moods range from the nostalgia of *Ah, Wilderness!* and *Life with Father* to the bitterness of *Waiting for Lefty* and *The Little Foxes* and the fantasy of *The Green Pastures* and *The Time of Your Life*. If there is a preponderance of comedy, it is because the American theatre has reached its greatest form of development in that medium—and, we repeat, because the editors have exercised their personal prerogatives in the selection.

The contents of this volume had been decided upon before

Brooks Atkinson was asked to contribute an introduction to it. What brickbats may be hurled at it, therefore, what indignant protests at the exclusion of plays that other editors might have fought and bled for, should be aimed directly at the heads of the undersigned.

BENNETT A. CERF
and
VAN H. CARTMELL

New York
January, 1941

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INTRODUCTION

BY BROOKS ATKINSON

During the past two or three days I have been having a good time. I have been reading the sixteen plays that constitute this volume. As a professional theatregoer of mellowing vintage I have met all but one of them in line of duty and might reasonably be expected to remember their salient characteristics. But to refresh my mind about Sidney Howard's *They Knew What They Wanted*, which was produced the year before my term as drama critic began, I started the other day to read the printed text. Since it made good reading and revived good memories, I ventured on to *The Front Page*, which is a volcano. In short, I have just emerged from the glow of reading all sixteen. Although they are only part of the fifty or seventy-five excellent plays written in the period between 1924 and 1939, I can honestly endorse them as lively reading and as evidence of the continuous vitality of the American theatre.

In the years before his harrowing death in 1939, Sidney Howard wrote at least two other major dramas—*The Silver Cord*, which brought the theatre up to date in the science of human behavior, and *Yellow Jack*, which taught the theatre how to tell a heroic story in experimental medicine. Both those plays pushed the theatre a little further ahead as a mature form of popular art and might logically find a place in a book like this one. But I think I have an affection for *They Knew What They Wanted* that goes a little deeper than my admiration for his two best works of later years. For his romantic and savory story of love and magnanimity in a California vineyard was his first popular success. It also presented with warmth and sympathy some of the best characters he ever created. Those of us who saw the Theatre Guild's production of *They Knew What They Wanted* in 1924 will never be able to read the racy dialogue of Mr. Howard's drama without hearing the voices of Pauline Lord, Richard Bennett and Glenn Anders rising and falling.

over the crises of the story. Those voices, all distinct and individual with remarkable contrast in tone and inflection, still haunt the text of the play.

On a sticky August evening in 1928, *The Front Page* swept into town and bowled over the public with the excitement and sting of a callous newspaper story. Up to that time there had never been a newspaper drama that newspaper people could recognize as authentic, since 1928 there has never been another. For Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur, hardened from leg-work on Chicago newspapers, still had a relish for the alertness, cynicism, shrewdness, penury and exuberance of the working newspaper man and they missed none of it in the characterizations of their drama. *The Front Page* is to journalism what *What Price Glory?* is to the marines—rudely realistic in style but romantic in its loyalties, and also audaciously profane. I cannot pretend that I still hear any individual voices above the resonant hubbub of that melodrama, but I can still see Lee Tracy nervously racing through the plot and Osgood Perkins, an extraordinarily skillful actor—now dead, alas—cutting through the uproar like a bright, sharp penknife, and peeling off the layers of the plot as he went along.

Probably there was a little rejoicing in heaven, in addition to the usual jubilation on Broadway, on the night of February 26, 1930. For Marc Connelly's classic, *The Green Pastures*, opened then, and as Rollo Ogden, venerable editor of the *New York Times*, remarked to me the next morning, Broadway "got religion" immediately. Using some of Roark Bradford's Negro stories as his source book, Mr. Connelly was telling the story of the Bible as a Negro Sunday School might imagine it, and his play has become a genuine part of American dramatic culture. I had gone to the theatre that evening with no particular knowledge of what was to take place. When the curtain rose the quiet scene laid in a Negro Sunday School was disarming enough. Then, while the scene was being changed, the Hall Johnson choir sang, "Rise, Shine, Give God the Glory," which was profoundly moving, and the ensuing scene representing a festival

in heaven was both humorous and tender. Then came the greatest entrance cue in modern drama "Gangway!" the Angel Gabriel called, "Gangway for de Lawd God Jehovah!" On to the stage walked a kindly, broad-shouldered man of many years, in a parson's coat. At that moment *The Green Pastures* became a classic. The man was Richard B. Harrison, a Negro reader, lecturer and teacher, who had never been on the stage before. As a person of genuine devotion, he had feared that *The Green Pastures* might be irreverent or sacrilegious. It turned out to be quite the contrary, and partly because of Harrison's playing. For he was a man of broadness of soul. After he had been playing the part a few weeks it was hard not to believe that a special divinity surrounded him. He was treated with great respect backstage. On two occasions I had the honor of meeting him socially, and I confess that I stood considerably in awe of him, for he was a thoughtful conversationalist, slow and sincere, anxious not to give any false impressions. When he died about five years later it became impossible to keep *The Green Pastures* on the stage. For those who had seen Mr. Harrison, no substitution in the part was possible. He had left an indelible imprint on the play.

Ever since *The Second Man* was produced by the Theatre Guild in 1927, S. N. Behrman has been America's nimblest author of high comedy. His characters have a worldly air, his dialogue is lightly humorous, his plots are usually insubstantial. What he writes might be dismissed as drawing-room comedy if Mr. Behrman were not interested in serious themes like politics, ethics and cross-currents of thought. Having a singularly scrupulous mind he writes his comedies impartially—pitting reactionary against radical, and since he is a listener to other people's thoughts he seldom takes sides. Although he is amused by pompousness he respects both points of view in any intelligent discussion. *Biography* was produced by the Theatre Guild in 1932, with Ina Claire irradiating the central part and Earle Larimore acting the part of the bristling insurgent. Although Mr. Behrman continues from season to season to look into the

hearts and under the motives of modern people who are caught in the web of circumstance, he has never improved on the characterizations in *Biography*, and he has never managed to make a more buoyant play from his observations

Ah, Wilderness! represents Eugene O'Neill's only holiday from somber thoughts about mankind. In 1933, when the Theatre Guild mounted his comedy of recollection, Mr. O'Neill was known as the author of heroic tragedies like *Desire Under the Elms*, *Strange Interlude* and *Mourning Becomes Electra*—black, passionate, dour studies of man's struggle with fate. The idea for a sentimental comedy popped into his mind while he was working on *Days Without End*, a turgid drama of religious mysticism. He wrote *Ah, Wilderness!* for the fun of it, rapidly and easily. Although the comedy is not autobiographical, many of the ideas come out of his youth and his recollections of New London, Conn., where his father and the family spent the summers. It was a stroke of good fortune to get George M. Cohan to play the part of the father. This was the first time Mr. Cohan had appeared in a play he had not written or helped to write. Gene Lockhart played the part of the bibulous and remorseful uncle, and Elisha Cook, Jr., played the boy. *Ah, Wilderness!* had a long run in New York and throughout the country. Full of humorous nostalgia, it helped a great deal to round out the elusive character of the one great dramatist America has contributed to the world.

When *The Petrified Forest* turned up in 1935, Robert Sherwood was already widely celebrated as the author of *Reunion in Vienna*, *The Queen's Husband* and *The Road to Rome*. Although the last two plays were popular, I confess that I thought their humor sophomoric and dull, and *Reunion in Vienna*, with the Lunts on a skylark, seemed to me no better than smart comedy. But *The Petrified Forest*, with the lucent Leslie Howard in the chief part, delighted me enormously as gusty melodrama and strongly appealed to me as just the sort of play a liberal with a sense of humor ought to write. Mr. Sherwood likes to mull things over, he also likes the roar and

rumble of a good show In *The Petrified Forest* he succeeded in making a plausible comment on the state of the world, simultaneously ripping off a good story of shooting Humphrey Bogart, who had not then made much impression on stage or screen, emerged in *The Petrified Forest* unshaven, with two guns and a professional career And to me Mr Sherwood's career as a working dramatist also began with this robust shooting show Now his career rises high against the skyline of modern drama Out of his brooding mind, out of his courage and integrity have come *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* and *There Shall Be No Night*, which have made an impression on the morals of the country Although Mr Sherwood is not a creative dramatic poet, like Eugene O'Neill, he is, I think, our greatest contemporary I have never known another man so completely fulfilled

About the same time a minor actor in the Group Theatre was chafing at the tugs Clifford Odets was submitting the script of a dynamic play about labor problems to a prize-play contest *Waiting for Lefty*, he called it Produced at a series of special Sunday performances, it awakened general interest in a fresh talent in playwriting Not being able to find a good script by any other author, the Group Theatre then decided to risk a production of Mr Odets's first full-length play, *Awake and Sing*, which had been kicking around for some time It is now recognized as one of the truly creative dramas in our literature After it was produced Mr Odets became the white-haired boy of the season and he plunged with enthusiasm and confidence into a career Although he has not fulfilled the entire promise of that cyclonic first year, he is a writer with great talent for the theatre He feels in theatre terms and his emotion is fiery and centrifugal *Waiting for Lefty* is a case in point It is not so much a "well-made play" as the score for a whirling experience in the theatre By the technical device of using the stage as a speaker's platform it draws the audience well inside the play Actors rise from all parts of the house, race down the aisles and destroy the usual barrier between stage and auditorium A small play, *Waiting for Lefty* has the natural form of a theatrical inspiration, and

I shall never forget the hot excitement of the first performance I saw on a Sunday afternoon in the battered, dog-eared Civic Repertory Theatre in Fourteenth Street

Sidney Kingsley's *Dead End*, which appeared the next autumn, is another play difficult to read without considering the stage setting. Some of the text looks like gibberish on the printed page. But it was played against one of Norman Bel Geddes's most extraordinary settings, representing an East River slum street where a luxurious apartment house butted against a decrepit tenement rookery. The pier-head of the street dropped straight into the orchestra pit. Some of the most scabrous street urchins ever assembled on a stage dove off the end of the pier and tore shrieking up and down the street to a sound track of accompanying river noises. Against this shocking background Mr. Kingsley's street scene with melodramatic devices was translated into a raucous tone poem of the modern city. It enlarged the experience of New York theatregoers, it also vividly directed attention to one of New York's most urgent social problems.

There is no problem involved in *Boy Meets Girl*, by Bella and Samuel Spewack, who are legally married and can therefore be as funny as they like on any topic. After giving their all for a fortune in Hollywood, they came back to Broadway in 1935 with a remarkably hilarious comedy about the hocus-pocus of screen writing. Since Hart and Kaufman's *Once in a Lifetime*, acted in 1930, there had not been a really successful cartoon of Hollywood antics, and there has never been such a good one since. Mr. and Mrs. Spewack were not writing at random. The two scribbling pranksters who turn comic handsprings through the play were suggested by the fantastic Hollywood behavior of Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur, represented in this volume as authors of *The Front Page*. Mr. Hecht and Mr. MacArthur are not easily impressed by big industry, and they do not take Hollywood seriously. No one goes so far as to suggest that the plot of *Boy Meets Girl* is a literal record of their escapades. The Spewacks' play is a free improvisation on a practical joker's theme, and George Abbott's racy

stage direction accounted for a good deal of the boisterous fun of *Boy Meets Girl* on Broadway. It had 669 performances in New York.

Clare Boothe, *la belle dame sans merci*, conquered Broadway on the night after Christmas in 1936. She had already written one drama about the pangs of married life, *Abide with Me*, which failed. But in *The Women* she succeeded by spraying vitriol over the members of her own sex with cutting wit and remarkable knowledge of her subject. In the foreword to the published script she says that "*The Women* is a satirical play about a numerically small group of ladies native to the Park Avenues of America," and that the title was chosen from several others she had considered—*Park Avenue*, *The Gals*, *The Ladies*, etc. On Broadway *The Women* was luxuriously produced with a sharp-clawed cast of "speaking cats," as Dr. Johnson might have called them, and with scenery that amounted to a Park Avenue sight-seeing tour—from cardroom to beauty parlor and bathroom. To keep this record straight, *The Women* is the only play in this volume that I did not applaud. "This reviewer disliked it," I wrote laconically at the end of my first-night notice. Miss Boothe's calculated and spiteful writing was too poisonous for my taste. But who are you and I against so many? *The Women* had 657 performances on Broadway. Since 1936 Miss Boothe has written *Kiss the Boys Goodbye* and *Margin for Error*, both of them successes, and more recently she has written a book about the first enigmatic year of the European war with a suggestion that the United States take warning.

Arthur Kober's "*Having Wonderful Time*" is a tender comedy about a Jewish summer resort in the Berkshires. Mr. Kober is a humorous and sympathetic writer with considerable affection for the little people who are trying to find a place for themselves in a cold world. As a young man he knew at first hand these summer colonies where Jewish young people devote a brief fortnight vacation to as much social and cultural achievement as they can manage. According to standards of assured society, Mr. Kober's portrait is comic. But it is never insensible, for Mr. Kober

respects the dreams and hopes of desperate vacationers who are driven by an inarticulate desire to improve themselves. When "*Having Wonderful Time*" was produced in 1937, Katherine Locke and Jules (now John) Garfield made quite a stir on Broadway. For all practical purposes that was the beginning of two wonderful times on stage and screen.

Like *The Green Pastures*, *Our Town*, produced in 1938, is a classic by reason of its humanity. The novelty of Thornton Wilder's stagecraft has overshadowed the artistic—or shall we say, the spiritual—qualities of the drama. It was played virtually without scenery and props. Much of the acting was in pantomime. The curtain was always kept rolled up, and Frank Craven, who played the composite rôle of manager, commentator and occasional dramatic character, stood informally over the footlights and personally guided the performance. The novelty of the bare stage production, however, was an integral part of the drama. For Mr. Wilder offers Grover's Corners, N. H., as a living fragment of the universe, indigenous not merely to New Hampshire, but to the life of man, and his point of view is not detached but compassionate. The story is the simple idyll of a neighborhood—talk about people, love and marriage, death and immortality. In style it is familiar, suffused in wonder. Mr. Wilder is a modest writer with no taste for passionate affirmation. But in one speech, spoken meditatively in the moonlight by a young country girl to her brother, he draws a deeply moving and imaginative connection between his gentle village and the profound riddle of the universe—

REBECCA I never told you about that letter Jane Crofut got from her minister when she was sick. The minister of her church in the town she was in before she came here. He wrote Jane a letter and on the envelope the address was like this. It said Jane Crofut, The Crofut Farm, Grover's Corners, Sutton County, New Hampshire, United States of America.

GEORGE What's funny about that?

REBECCA But listen, it's not finished the United States of America, Continent of North America, Western Hemisphere, the Earth, the Solar System, the Universe, the Mind of God—that's what it said on the envelope.

GEORGE What do you know!

REBECCA And the postman brought it just the same.

GEORGE What do you know!

Martha Scott had her first conspicuous success in *Our Town* in the part of Emily Webb, and John Craven, son of Frank Craven, made something memorable out of the part of George Gibbs

The Little Foxes, produced in the fertile year of 1939, is Lillian Hellman's second successful drama Her first, *The Children's Hour*, was produced in the autumn of 1934 It was an excoriating record of the mischief caused by idle gossip Her second play, *Days to Come*, was not a success two years later, but it better represented Miss Hellman's dominant interest in matters of social importance *The Little Foxes*, which indulges that interest, is the story of greedy brothers and a greedy sister who coldly devour the earth, scheming, twisting, driving their way to material success As a craftsman, Miss Hellman is the chief representative of the "well-made play" She has a clear, organized mind, she can plan a plot that yields excitement, and her literary style is dramatic What she has to say in *The Little Foxes* she says concretely, with great decision, and her portrait of voracity is a bitter one On a night in February, 1939, it also gave Tallulah Bankhead her first popular success in this country After shuffling through a number of inconsequential plays, Miss Bankhead strode through the part of Regina Giddens with great singleness of purpose like an actress awakened by a well-written part Patricia Collinge also gave a notable performance as the humiliated Birdie Hubbard

The Man Who Came to Dinner reveals George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart at the top of their bent After collaborating for the first time in 1930 on *Once in a Lifetime*, they have worked together on several plays—including *You Can't Take It with You* and *The American Way* *The Man Who Came to Dinner* is a merciless cartoon of Alexander Woollcott's bad manners, shameless egoism, bountiful mischief and widely assorted friendships, it is written with destructive wit It is an example of loud, swift, blistering American comedy at its best If Mr. Kaufman, Mr. Hart and Mr. Woollcott were not chums, *The Man Who Came to Dinner* might reasonably call for a cessation of fa-

miliarities—particularly since Mr Kaufman and Mr Hart, with the instinct of friendship, have concentrated on the most vulnerable aspects of Mr Woolcott's character But he has been sufficiently delighted with the malicious virtuosity of their play to act the central rôle himself in other parts of the country In New York the part is played with superb relish and authority by Monty Woolley, a former Yale savant, with wit and a beard At this writing Mr Woolcott is girding his mountainous loins for another tour in a wheelchair

Nine days after *The Man Who Came to Dinner* shot into town, William Saroyan's *The Time of Your Life* took up residence across the street, and eventually captured both the Critic's Circle and the Pulitzer prizes Mr Saroyan, the ebullient Armenian, is the imp of the modern drama He has an instinct for characters and themes, but no artistic discipline To Mr Saroyan the lack of discipline is an essential part of his genius, but a good many theatregoers, accustomed to orderly drama, merely regard him as a pain in the neck The truth lies somewhere between these two points of view Since Mr Saroyan lacks discipline, since he uses material impulsively just as it pops into his head and lives exclusively off the top of his emotion, he is an erratic writer, and any contact he makes with the mind of the theatregoer is chiefly accidental His happiest accident was *My Heart's in the Highlands*, a one-act lyric in celebration of friendship and good will, played with imaginative beauty by the Group Theatre The three-act form is a harder test of Mr Saroyan's endurance, but *The Time of Your Life* passed the test with the assistance of Eddie Dowling, who helped to direct and also played the part of Joe with sweetness and understanding Mr Saroyan's liking for undistinguished people, his enthusiasm for the minor crotchets of living, and his comradely sense of humor are original, innocent and enjoyable I liked *The Time of Your Life* the first time I saw it I was enthusiastic the second time I saw it and I enjoy reading it now Some time, I hope, the stars in their course may be propitious again, and, work-

ing under their influence, Mr Saroyan may dash off another friendly drama to the surprise of Broadway and himself

While *The Time of Your Life* was breaking up old friendships in that rushing autumn of 1939, *Life with Father* settled into the Empire Theatre, apparently forever For this is the perfect American comedy with popular appeal The joke on which it is based is the fundamental one of the "papa love mama" comic strip But there is nothing cheap or commonplace about *Life with Father* Although the basic joke is an old one, father is a man worth respecting He is logical, industrious, unselfish, fond of his sons, devoted to his wife, the backbone of America He lacks humor and imagination, but he has in abundance the enduring virtues of the head of a family As a matter of fact, he was the father of the late Clarence Day, who wrote sketches about him with humorous independence in *The New Yorker* After Clarence Day's death, Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse, who had previously collaborated on musical comedies, made a play out of the sketches and managed with great skill to preserve the good taste and mettlesome humor of the source material Father is comic, but a real person His anxiety over his wife's health is genuinely touching, which illustrates Bernard Shaw's thesis that no comedy is a good one unless it is also moving After trying in vain to persuade a star actor to play the part of the monumental parent, Mr Lindsay decided to act the part himself and he engaged his wife, Dorothy Stickney, to play the part of Vinnie His choice in actors has turned out to be excellent *Life with Father* has restored the era of good feelings to the stage

New York

January, 1941

They Knew What
They Wanted

BY SIDNEY HOWARD

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to Harold Freedman, Brandt and Brandt, 101 Park Avenue, New York City

They Knew What They Wanted was first produced at the Garrick Theatre, New York City, by the Theatre Guild, on November 24, 1924, and closed on November 14, 1925. Following is the original cast:

| | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| JOE | Glenn Anders |
| FATHER MCKEE | Charles Kennedy |
| AH GEE | Allen Atwell |
| TONY | Richard Bennett |
| THE R F D | Robert Cook |
| AMY | Pauline Lord |
| ANGELO | Hardwick Nevin |
| GIORGIO | Jacob Zollinger |
| THE DOCTOR | Charles Tazewell |
| FIRST ITALIAN MOTHER | Frances Hyde |
| HER DAUGHTER | Antoinette Bizzoco |
| SECOND ITALIAN MOTHER | Peggy Conway |
| HER SON | Edward Rosenfeld |

Production directed by Philip Moeller
Settings and costumes by Carolyn Hancock

SCENE

Tony's farmhouse in the Napa Valley, California

ACT ONE

Morning, in early summer

ACT TWO

Evening Same day

ACT THREE

Three months later

THEY KNEW WHAT THEY WANTED

SCENE

The scene of the play is the home of an Italian winegrower in the Napa Valley in California. All of the action takes place in the main downstairs room which serves as general living and dining room.

It is necessary to understand that the house is not in the least Spanish in its architecture. As a matter of fact, it would serve any respectable Middle-Western farmer as a fitting and inconspicuous residence. It was built in the 'nineties of wood, is painted white on its exterior, and has only one story.

A door at the back, the main one to the outer world, gives on the porch. Another door, to the right of the audience, gives on the kitchen. The kitchen is three steps above the level of the room and so placed that the audience can see into it. It is completely furnished. A third door, to the left of the audience, gives on a flight of steps which leads to the cellar of the house. A fourth door, also on the left and farther down stage, gives on the bedroom.

The back wall should also be broken by windows, on the right of the central door, a bay window; on the left, a double flat window.

The view from the house is over a valley and toward brown Californian hills. The landscape is checkered with cultivation. Some of the checkers are orchards. Most of them are vineyards. The foreground is all vines. Vines tune about the pillars of the porch. In the beginning of the play—it begins in summer—the grapes on the porch vines are small and green. In the last act—three months having elapsed—they are large and purple.

The back stage must be so arranged that people who approach the house from the highroad appear to mount the porch steps from a much lower level. At other times, however, it is required that the characters be able to go and come on the level of the house itself where the farmyard is.

Inside the room the wallpaper and the carpet are new and garish. The cheapest variety of lace curtains hangs in the windows. The furniture is new and includes a golden-oak dining table with chairs to match, a morris chair, another easy chair, a chest of drawers, a sideboard, a hat rack.

On one wall hangs a picture of Garibaldi. A picture of George Washington hangs over the central door. Other mural decorations include a poster of the Navigazione Generale Italiana, a still life chromo, a religious chromo, and a small mirror.

On the hat rack hangs a double-barrelled shotgun draped with a loaded cartridge belt.

The whole impression must be one of gaiety and simple good living.

ACT ONE

The red, white and green of Italy combine with the red, white and blue of these United States in bunting, garlands of fluted paper, pompons and plumes of shredded tissue, to make up a scheme of decoration which is, to say the least, violent. The picture of Garibaldi is draped with an American flag, the picture of Washington with an Italian flag. The full glare of the early morning sun streams in through door and windows.

The room is fairly littered with boxes. Atop one of these, from which it has just been extracted, stands a handsome wedding cake, surmounted by statuary representing the ideal bride and groom in full regalia under a bell. The boxes are all addressed to

Tony Patucci,
R F D , Napa, Calif

AL GEE stands on a ladder on the porch outside the open entrance door, hanging Chinese lanterns. He is a silent, spare Chinaman, of age maturely indeterminate. He wears blue overalls and a black chambray shirt.

JOE—dark, sloppy, beautiful, and young—is busy opening a packing case in the center of the stage. His back is turned upon the door.

JOE (as he works, he half sings, half mutters to himself the words of "Remember," an I W W song, to the tune of "I told the Fort")

"We speak to you from jail to-day,
Two hundred union men,
We're here because the bosses' laws
Bring slavery again."

(Through this the curtain rises and FATHER MC KEE is seen climbing the porch steps. He wears the sober garb of a Catholic priest, not over clean, what with dust, spots, and all. He nods to AL GEE and comes into the doorway. He stands a moment to mop his large, pale face with a red bandana. Then he lowers lugubrious disapproval upon everything in sight. Then he yawns.)

He is one of those clerics who can never mention anything except to denounce it. And his technique of denunciation is quite special to himself. It consists in a long, throaty abstention from inflection of any kind which culminates in a vocal explosion when he reaches the accented syllable of a word upon which his emphasis depends. This word always seems to wake him up for an instant. Once it is spoken, however, he relapses into semi-somnolence for the remainder of his remarks. At heart, he is genial and kindly enough, quite the American counterpart of the French village curé.)

FATHER MCKEE Hello, Joe

JOE Hello there, Padre What do you think?

FATHER MCKEE Looks to me like a bawdy house

JOE It's goin to be some festa
Lily Cups! What do you know about that for style?

FATHER MCKEE Where's Tony?

JOE (*nods toward the door of the bedroom*) In there gettin' dolled up
Hey, there, bridegroom! The Padre's out here

FATHER MCKEE I come up to have a serious talk with Tony

JOE Well, for God's sake, don't get him upset no more'n what he is already He's been stallin' around all mornin', afraid to go down and meet the bride You better leave him alone

FATHER MCKEE I'm always glad to have your advice, Joe I didn't look to find you still hangin' 'round

JOE Oh, didn't you, Padre?

FATHER MCKEE Tony told me you'd decided to go away

JOE Well, Padre, I'll tell you how it is (*He grins impudently*) I don't believe in stayin' any one place too long 'Tain't fair for me not to give the rest of California a chance at my society But I ain't goin' before I seen all the fun, got Tony safely married, an' kissed the bride (*He turns to the door and AH GEE*) That's fine, Ah Gee Better take these here Lily Cups in the kitchen when you get through

(Magnificently TONY enters from the bedroom He is stout, floridly bronzed, sixty years old, vigorous, jovial, simple, and excitable His great gift is for gesture To-day we meet him in his Sunday best, a very brilliant purple suit with a more than oriental waistcoat which serves to display a stupendous gold watch chain He wears a boiled shirt, an emerald-green tie, and a derby hat He carries his new patent-leather shoes in his hand He seems to be perspiring rather freely)

TONY Looka me! I'm da most stylish fella in da world

FATHER MCKEE I come up to talk to you, Tony

TONY I'm glad you come, Padre How you like my clothes, eh? Costa playnta good money! (*Attention is called to the shoes*) For da feet

JOE (*a motion to the wedding cake*) How's it strike you, Tony?

TONY Madonna! (*He throws his shoes into the morris chair His hat assumes a terrific angle He cannot keep his hands off that cake*) Look, Padre! From Frisco! Special! Twelve dollar' an' two bits! Look! (*The miniature bride and groom particularly please him*) Ees Tony an' his Amy!

JOE Them lanterns is Ah Gee's personal donation

TONY Thank you, Ah Gee! Ees verra fine Ah Gee, you go an' bring vino, now, for Padre, eh? (*AH GEE obeys the order, taking the Lily Cupr with him into his kitchen*)

JOE Show some speed now, Tony It's past nine 'Tain't hardly pretty to keep the bride waitin'

TONY (*as he sits down to the struggle with his shoes*) I'm goin' verra quick

FATHER MCKEE I got to have a word with you, Tony, before you go to the station

JOE The Padre's been tryin' to tell me you're scared to have me around where I can kiss the bride (*He picks up a couple of flags and goes outside*)

TONY (*in undisguised terror*) You ain't goin' be kissin' no bride, Joe You hear dat?

JOE (*off stage he is heard singing*)

"We laugh and sing, we have no fear
Our hearts are always light,
We know that every Wobbly true
Will carry on the fight"

TONY He's too goddam fresh, dat fella, with kissin' my Amy an' all dose goddam Wobbly songs Don' you think so, Padre?

FATHER MCKEE I didn't come up here to talk about Joe, Tony I come up to talk about this here weddin'

TONY I'm glad you come, Padre I'm verra bad scare'

FATHER MCKEE You got good reason for bein' scared, if you want to know what I think

TONY I got verra special reason

FATHER MCKEE What reason?

TONY Don' you never mind! Da's my secret dat I don' tell nobody You tell Joe he go away quick Padre Den maybe, ees all right

FATHER MCKEE So that's it! Well, I don't blame you for that

TONY (*deeply indignant at the implication*) Oh! No, by God! You don' ondrastan', Padre Joe is like my own son to me! Ees som'thing verra different Madonna mia! Ees som'thing I been doin' myself! Ees som'thing Tony's been doin' w'at's goin' mak' verra bad trouble for Tony

FATHER MCKEE I'll tell Joe nothin' You've made your own bed and if you won't get off it while there's time, you got to lie on it But I want you to understand that I don't like nothin' 'bout this here weddin' It ain't got my approval

TONY (*the first shoe slips on and he sits up in amazement*) You don't like weddin', Padre?

FATHER MCKEE No, I don't An' that's just what I come up here to tell you I don't like nothin' about it, an' if you persist in goin' ahead in spite of my advice, I don't want you savin' afterwards that you wasn't warned

TONY Dio mio! (*He amplifies this with the sign of the cross Then his confidence rather returns to him*) Aw tak' a pinch-a snuff! You mak' me tire', Padre! You think festa is no good for people You padre fellas don' know nothing Work! Work! Work evra day! Den, by-an'-by, is comin' festa After festa workin' is more easy (*He resumes the shoe problem*)

FATHER MCKEE Tony, you know perfectly well that I ain't got no more objection to no festa than I have to

any other pomp of the flesh But I'm your spirichool adviser an' I been mullin' this weddin' over in my mind an' I come to the conclusion that I'm agin it I don't like it at all I got my reasons for what I say

TONY (*does the Padre guess his secret?*) W'at reason you got?

FATHER MCKEE In the first place, you ain't got no business marryin' no woman who ain't a good Cath'lic

TONY (*immeasurable relief*) Ees no matter

FATHER MCKEE A mixed marriage ain't no better'n plain livin' in sin

TONY Ain' we got you for keep' sin away, Padre?

FATHER MCKEE Why ain't you marryin' a woman out of your own parish instead of trapesin' all the way to Frisco to pick out a heretic?

TONY Is no good womans in dees parish

FATHER MCKEE What's wrong with 'em?

TONY Joe is sleepin' with evra one

FATHER MCKEE That ain't the point

TONY (*enlisting the shoe to help his gesticulation*) Oh, ees point all right, Padre Joe is told me 'bout evrathing I been lookin' all 'round here at all da womans in dees parish I been lookin' evra place for twent' mile Ees no good womans for wife here Joe is told me 'bout evra one Den I'm gone to Napa for look all round dere an' in Napa ees no better

ees just da same like here So den I go down all da way to Frisco for look after wife an' I find my Amy She is like a rose, all wilt' You puttin' water on her an' she come out most beautiful I'm goin' marry with my Amy, Padre, an' I don' marry with nobody else She's been tellin' me she is no Cath'lic I say, w'at I care? By an' by, maybe, if we bein' patient, we bringin' her in da church, an' showin' her da candles and da Madonna, all fix up good with flowers and da big tin heart, an' evrathing smellin' so prett' an' you preachin' verra loud an' da music an' evrathing, maybe by an' by . (*He turns again to his shoe*) But now ees no mater W'at I care?

FATHER MCKEE It don't look good to me

TONY Ees all right . If you don' want my Amy an' me gettin' married with good Cath'lic priest like you, den, by God—

FATHER MCKEE I ain't said I wouldn't marry you

TONY Eh bene!

FATHER MCKEE I'm only tryin' to tell you

TONY Ah! Dio mio (*The shoes goes on, producing intense pain*) He look much better as he feel!

FATHER MCKEE There ain't no good in no old man marryin' with no young woman

TONY You think anybody marry with old woman? Tak' a pinch-a snuff!

FATHER MCKEE I know one old man who married a young woman an' she carried on with a stage driver!

TONY Dio mio!

FATHER MCKEE He had knowed her all her life, too, an' you ain't knowed your Amy more'n 'bout five minutes

TONY Ees no matter

FATHER MCKEE An' I know another fellow who married one of them city girls like your Amy without bein' properly acquainted an' she turned out to be a scarlet woman

TONY My Amy don' do dat
(*AH GEE enters from kitchen with two glasses and a bottle of wine*)

FATHER MCKEE Ain't you just now been tellin' me you're scared of her seem' Joe?

TONY No, by God!

FATHER MCKEE Joe ain't the only young fellow around, either!

TONY Young fellas is no matter Only Joe An' I ain' scare' over Joe excep' for special reason You tell Joe, Padre (*He is returning to his old subject, but the wine distracts him*) Ah-h-h!

FATHER MCKEE Why didn't you get married forty years ago?

TONY I think you know verra good w'y Ees because I'm no dam' fool W'en I'm young, I got nothin' I'm broke all da time, you remember? I got no money for havin' wife I don' want no wife for mak' her work all da time Da's no good, dat Da's mak' her no more young, no more prett' Evrbody say Tony

is crazy for no' havin' wife I say Tony is no dam' fool W'at is happen? Pro'ibish' is com' Salute! (*A glass of wine AH GEE has returned to his kitchen*) An' wat I say? I say, "Ees dam' fool law Ees dam' fool fellas for bein' scare' an' pullin' up da grape' for tryin' growin' somethin' different' W'at I'm doin'? I'm keep the grape, eh? I say, "I come in dees country for growin' da grape! God mak' dees country for growin' da grape! Ees not for pro'ibish' God mak' dees country Ees for growin' da grape!" Ees truc? Sure ees true! (*Another glass of wine*) An' w'at happen? Before pro'ibish' I sell my grape' for ten, maybe twelve dollir' da ton Now I sell my grape' some-time one hundra dollar' da ton Pro'ibish' is mak' me verra rich (*Another glass of wine*) I got my fine house I got Joe for bein' foreman I got two men for helpin' Joe I got one Chink for cook I got one Ford car I got all I want, evrathing, excep' only wife Now I'm goin' have wife Verra nice an' young an' fat Not for work No! For sit an' holdin' da hands and havin' kuds Three kids (*He demonstrates the altitude of each*) Antonio Giuseppe Anna Da's like trees an' cows an' all good people Da's fine for God an' evrbody! I tell you, Padre, Tony know w'at he want!

FATHER MCKEE Whatever made you think a man of your age could have children? (*This staggers TONY*) I tell you, Tony, it ain't possible

TONY Eh? Tony is too old for havin' kids? I tell you, Tony can have twent' kids if he want! I tell you Tony can have kids w'en he is one hundra year' old Dio mio! From da sole of his feet to da top of his hat, Tony is big, strong man! I think I

ondrastan' you verra good, Padre
Tony is not too old for havin' kids
He's too rich, eh? (*This rather strikes
home*) Yah! Tony is rich an', if he
don't have no kids, den da church is
gettin' all Tony's money an da
Padre is gettin Tony's fine house all
fix' up good for livin' in, eh?

FATHER MCKEE (*a very severe shepherd*) Tony!

TONY (*the horns of the devil with
his fingers*) Don' you go for puttin'
no evil eye on Tony an' his Amy!

FATHER MCKEE You're givin' way to
ignorant superstition, which ain't
right in no good Cath'lic

TONY (*on his feet in a panic*) Dio
mio! My Amy is comin' on dat train
an' here you keep me, sittin', talk-
in'

FATHER MCKEE You irreverent old
lunatic, you, if you're bent on marry-
in', I'll marry you (*JOE reappears in
the doorway*) But I don't want you
comin' around afterwards squawkin'
about it

TONY Eh, Joe! Da Padre don't want
me gettin' marry with my Amy be-
cause he's scare' da church don't never
get my money!

JOE For cripe's sake, Tony, ain't you
heard that whistle?

TONY I go! I go!

JOE Train's in now

TONY Porco Dio! Ah Gee!

JOE Fix your tie

TONY I fix (*AH GEE comes
from the kitchen for his master's*

order) Un altro fiasco (*AH GEE re-
turns to the kitchen*)

JOE You won't make no hut if you're
drunk, Tony

TONY Not drunk, Joe Only scare'.
Verra bad scare'

JOE Bridegrooms is always scared

TONY Jes' Chris', maybe I'm sick!

JOE No!

TONY Santa Maria, I *am* sick!

JOE What's wrong with you?

TONY I don' know! I'm sick! I'm
sick! I'm sick!

(*AH GEE returns with the wine bot-
tle refilled* TONY seeks prompt solace
AH GEE goes back to his kitchen)

JOE You'll be a helluva sight sicker if
you don't lay off that stuff

TONY I canno' go for get my Amy,
Joe I canno' go

JOE All right I'll go

TONY Oh, by God! No! NO!

JOE Tony, if you drive the Ford
down the hill in this state of mind
you'll break your dam' neck

TONY (*more solace*) I feel good now
I drive fine I don' want nobody for
go for my Amy but only me
(*Then he weakens again*) Joe, I'm
scare', I'm scare', I'm scare'!

JOE What you scared of, Tony?

TONY Maybe my Amy

JOE Come on, beat it!

TONY I feel good now an' I don't want nobody for go for my Amy but only me You bet! *(He starts)*

JOE That's the boy!

TONY *(another relapse)* Joe, you don't get mad if I ask you som'thing? I got verra good reason, Joe Joe how soon you goin' away, Joe?

JOE You don't want me to go, do you?

TONY I think ees much better

JOE What's the idea, Tony?

TONY Joe som'thing is happen', da's all You go, Joe I been tryin' for three days for ask you dees, Joe, an' I been scare' you get mad I pay you double extra for goin' to day, for goin' now, eh? Joe? Verra quick?

JOE An' miss the festa? Like hell!

TONY Joe, you don' ondrastan'

JOE Forget it, Tony

TONY Joe

JOE If you keep her waitin', she'll go back to Fresno

TONY Dio Mio! *(He goes to the door and turns yet once again)* Joe ? *(He catches FATHER MC KEE's eye)* Som'thing verra bad is goin' happen with Tony Clean evrathing clean before my Amy come *(He is really gone)* JOE follows him out and stands on the porch looking after him *(A Ford motor roars and dices away into high speed)*

FATHER MC KEE *(at the window).* Look at him!

JOE He could drive that Ford in his sleep

FATHER MCKEE I don't hold with no old man gallivantin'

JOE Don't you fret, Padre Didn't I tell you not to get him all worked up? *(This ruffles the good priest who makes to follow TONY JOE intercepts him and forces him back into the room)*

FATHER MC KEE Well?

JOE Sit down a minute You been tellin' Tony what you think Now I got some tellin' to do

FATHER MC KEE Have you, indeed? Well, I don't see no good—

JOE Maybe I don't see much good, but what the hell!

FATHER MC KEE Young man! That's the pernicious doctrine of Lacey Fairey

JOE What's that?

FATHER MC KEE A French expression meanin' "Sufficient unto the day"

JOE What of it? If folks is bent on makin' mistakes, an' you can't stop 'em, let 'em go ahead, that's what I say I don't want nobody hatin' my guts for bein too dam' right all the time, see? Not bein' a priest, I aim to get along with folks That way, when they're in wrong, I can be some use

FATHER MC KEE That ain't in accord with the teachin's of Jesus!

JOE A helluva lot you an' me know about the teachin's of Jesus

FATHER MCKEE Joe, if you ain't goin' to be rev'rent

JOE I'm talkin' now

FATHER MCKEE Oh, are you?

JOE Yeah I wouldn't have no harm come to Tony, not for anything in the world, see? An' I been agitatin' against this weddin' a lot longer'n you have an' I know what it's all about, see? I'm here goin' on five months, now, an' that's longer'n I ever stayed any one place

FATHER MCKEE Is it?

JOE Except' once in jail, it is An' I been lookin' after Tony all the time since I come here I come in to bum a meal an' I stayed five months Five months I been workin' for Tony an' lookin' after him and he's treated me dam' good an' that's God's truth I wouldn't have worked that long for him if he hadn't treated me dam' good, either I ain't none too strong for stayin' put, you know I like to move an' now I'm goin' to move I'm what the papers call a "unskilled migratory" an' I got to migrate, see? Tony wants me to go an' I want to go But, what I want to know is who's goin' to look after Tony when I'm gone?

FATHER MCKEE Ain't that his wife's place?

JOE Sure it's his wife's place But suppose this weddin' don't turn out so good? Are you goin' to look out for him?

FATHER MCKEE Ain't Tony my spirachool charge an' responsibility?

JOE All right! An' I ain't so sure you're goin' to have much trouble either Amy looks to ne like a fair to muddlin' smart kid an' she knows what she's in for, too

FATHER MCKEE You seem to be well informed, Joe! Do you happen to know the lady?

JOE I ain't never laid eyes on her (*Then the implication percolates*) Oh, I may go chasin' women plenty, but I don't chise Tony's wife, see? An' I ain't fixin' to, neither Just get that straight

FATHER MCKEE I'm glad to hear it, Joe

JOE But I happen to know about her Didn't I have to write all Tony's letters for him? You wouldn't expect Tony to be writin' to no lady with his education, would you?

FATHER MCKEE No, I can't say that I would

JOE Why, I even had to read him the letters she wrote back That's how I got my dope An' what I say is she's got plenty of sense Don't you fool yourself she hasn't I'll show you (*He goes to the chest of drawers for some letters and photographs He brings them back to the PADRE*) You can see for yourself (*And he submits Exhibit A—a letter*) Tony goes to Frisco lookin' for a wife, see? The nut! An' he finds Amy waitin' on table in a spaghetti joint Joint's called "Il Trovatore" Can you beat it? He ain't even got the nerve to speak to her He don't even go back to see her again He just falls for her, gets her name from the boss an' comes home an' makes me write her a letter

proposin' marriage That's her answer

FATHER MCKEE It's good clear writ in' It's a good letter It looks like she's got more character'n what I thought But, just the same, it ain't no way to conduct a courtship

JOE There's worse ways

FATHER MCKEE She says she likes 'he letter you wrote

JOE The second time I wrote, I told her all about the farm an' just how she was goin' to be fixed Oh, I was careful not to say nothin' about Tony's money Only the Ford I thought she ought to know about the Ford (*He hands the second letter over*) An' she wrote this one back

FATHER MCKEE She likes the country, does she? She wants Tony's photo

JOE Say, you ought to have seen Tony gettin' his face shot! By God! It took me a whole week to talk him into it An' when I did get him down there—you know that place across from the depot?—dam' if he wasn't scared right out of his pants!

FATHER MCKEE By what?

JOE By the camera! Would you believe it? We had to clamp him into the chair, both of us, the photographer an' me! You ought to have seen that wop sweat! And when we try to point the machine at him, he gives a yell you could hear a block an' runs right out in the street!

FATHER MCKEE No!

JOE I couldn't get him back, only I promised to let the guy shoot me

first They was some pictures! 'Tonly's (*he hands a specimen to the FATHER*) sure looks like him, but she must have seen somethin' in it, because she sent hers right back (*He studies AMY's photograph for a moment before submitting it*) Here Not bad huh?

FATHER MCKEE (*a long and very pleased contemplation*) There ain't no explainin' women! (*He returns the photograph*) Do you think she's straight, Joe?

JOE What the hell! If she ain't, she wants to be That's the main thing

FATHER MCKEE Maybe it won't turn out so bad, after all There's always this about life no man don't never get everything he sets out to get, but half the time he don't never find out he ain't got it

JOE Oh, if you're goin' off on that tack!

FATHER MCKEE It's the tack life travels on, with the help of Almighty God

JOE What the hell! Life ain't so bad

FATHER MCKEE I'm delighted to hear you say so!

JOE (*he has returned the exhibits to the drawer*) I never put over anything half so good myself!

FATHER MCKEE Do you think Tony's goin' to put it over?

JOE Wait and see

FATHER MCKEE Well, I don't know how I can approve of this weddin',

but I'm willin' to give it the benefit of my sanction an' to do all I can to help it along an' look out for Tony Does that satisfy you? Just the same, I don't believe in unnecessary chances, Joe Pull along out of here 'ike Tony asked you to

JOE Say, you make me soie! Why, anybody 'ud think, to hear you talk, that I'm all set to .

(The R F D has appeared on the porch. He carries a dusty coat on his arm, and wipes the sweat from his brow with his blue handkerchief. He wears a gray flannel shirt, old trousers hitched to suspenders that are none too secure. His badge is his only sign of office. He is an eager, tobacco-chewing old countryman.)

THE R F D Hey, Tony! Tony! *(As he reaches the door)* Where's Tony? 'Mornin', Padre

JOE Tony's gone to town. You're early

THE R F D That's more'n Tony is. I got to get his signature on a piece of registered mail.

JOE What is it?

THE R F D It's his wife. *(JOE and the PRIEST rise astonished.)* Sure! I got her outside in the buckboard an' she's madder'n hell because Tony didn't meet her. She's some girl, too. I never heard the beat! I and a girl like that an' don't even take the trouble to— *(The other two are already at the windows.)*

JOE Where'd you find her?

THE R F D I finds her pacin' up and down the platform an' I gives her a lift. I sure do hate to see a good-

lookin' girl cry—an' she sure was cryin'! I reckoned Tony couldn't get the Ford started so—

FATHER MCKEE He went down all right. I wonder what happened to him?

JOE He must have took the short cut.

FATHER MCKEE Didn't you pass him?

JOE I knew I ought to have went instead.

FATHER MCKEE He wasn't in no condition.

THE R F D I'll have a look on my way back.

JOE What are we goin' to do with her?

THE R F D Ask her in.

JOE Ah Gee! *(He goes out, calling) Giorgio! Angelo!* *(THE R F D follows him. AH GEE comes from his kitchen and evinces some confusion, but does not hold back from the summons. FATHER MCKEE arranges his costume and goes out last. The stage remains empty for a moment. A babble of voices is heard, voices that speak both English and Italian.)* JOE *(is heard shouting)* Lend a hand with that trunk!

AMY'S VOICE How do you do? I'm pleased to meet you. I certainly had some time getting here. I certainly expected somebody would meet me at the station.

FATHER MCKEE'S VOICE The old man left all right.

JOE'S VOICE He started a little too late

THE R F D'S VOICE I'll have a look for him (*The rest is lost in a babble of Italian as AMY comes on to the porch and the others follow her, not the least among them being the two Italian hands, GIORGIO and ANGLLO whose volubility subsides only as AMY enters the room. As for AMY, she is all that TONY said of her and much more. She wears a pretty dress, new, ready-made, and inexpensive, and a charming and equally cheap hat. Her shoes are bright coloured and her handbag matches them. But her own loveliness is quite beyond belief. She is small and plump and vivid and her golden hair shimmers about her face like morning sun shine. She herself shines with an inner constitutional energy. Her look is, to be sure, just a little tired. She probably is not more than twenty-two or -three, but she seems older. Her great quality is definiteness. It lends pathos to her whole personality. At the moment, her vanity is piqued by TONY's remissness and she carries matters with a hand a little too high to be entirely convincing. She is embarrassed, of course, but she won't admit it.*)

AMY (*as she enters*) I must say it ain't my idea of the way a gentleman ought to welcome his blooming bride. I don't get it. I don't get it at all. What was the matter?

JOE Why, nothin'.

FATHER MCKEE He was scared.

AMY Scared of me? Why didn't you come yourself?

JOE I wanted to, but

AMY (*the decorations have caught her eye*) Say, did you folks go and do all this for the wedding?

JOE Sure we did.

AMY Well, if that ain't the cutest ever! A regular wop wedding! Excuse me. I meant Italian. (*The "I" is long.*)

JOE That's all right.

AMY And here's the priest, too, all set and ready. Say! I can see right now I'm going to like it here.

JOE I don't guess nobody's goin' to kick at that.

AMY All right, then, I'll forgive you. That's the way I am. Forgive and forget! I always believe in letting bygones be bygones. And down at the station I was thinking. Well, if they ain't got enough sense of politeness to come after the bride, I'm going to hop the very next train back to Fusco. I'd have done it, too, only—would you believe it?—I didn't have the price of a ticket! I spent the last cent I had on this hat. Six, when I remembered that maybe I didn't cry! That's what I was crying over when you come up. (*This to the R F D, otherwise her eyes have scarcely left Joe's face.*)

THE R F D Pleased to have been of service, ma'am.

AMY Well, you certainly was of service. But here I am alive and well, as they say, so I guess we don't need to fuss about that any more. I guess I'll sit down. (*She does so.*)

JOE Here's the cook an' the hands to pay their respects.

ANGELO (*a deep obeisance to AMY*)
Eh, la nostra padrona! Tanti auguri,
cara Signora, e buona festa! Come
sta? Ha fatto buon viaggio? (*Here*
GIORGIO *adds his voice*)

ANGELO (*together*) GIORGIO
Siamo tanto contenti di vedevla,
Speriamo che si troverà sempre
bene e felice nella casa ospitale
del nostro generoso padrone
Sia la benvenuta, cgregia Signora
Auguriamo la buona fortuna a lei,
e al suo stimatissimo sposo Che
la Santa Madonna le dia la sua
benedizione e che tutti i santi
l'accompagnino nel matrimonio!

JOE Hey, that's enough!

AMY Now, that was very nice of
them I liked every word they said
I guess I better study up on the lingo
All I know is words like spaghetti
and ravioli

ANGELO and GIORGIO (*sotto voce*)
Ah! La Signora parla Italiano!

AMY I guess you got plenty of
that around Well, you can't make
me mad I just love it (*Then she*
sees AH GEE's ceremonious obeisance)
How do you do? Are you the cook?

AH GEE Yes, missy Velly good cook

AMY Say! I didn't know I drew a
chef You didn't tell me (*AH GEE*
takes himself off) Say, my baggage
is out there

JOE All right boys, lend a hand
(*ANGELO and GIORGIO go down the*
steps)

AMY If you don't mind I'll just keep
an eye on them My wedding dress
is in that trunk I bet you didn't expect
me to bring a wedding dress
Well, I didn't expect to, myself And
I don't know why I did But I did!
I just blew myself I said "You only
get married once" and—I got a veil,
too I got the whole works (*She*
hears her trunk en route) Go easy
there! (*She is out on the porch*)

THE R F D Well, that's her

JOE (*as he goes to help*) She ain't
bad

FATHER MCKEE No, she ain't half
bad

AMY (*calling down*) Not upside
down! Be careful, can't you?

THE R F D I don't hold much with
city girls myself, but—

JOE (*calling down*) Careful boys!
Look out for that vine! Gimme the
grip

FATHER MCKEE Oh, she's above the
average

THE R F D (*nudging him*) Do you
think she ?

FATHER MCKEE I wouldn't hardly
like to say off-hand, but

THE R F D I wouldn't think so

FATHER MCKEE Joe, do you think
she ?

JOE No Not her Not on your life
(*He puts grip down inside the bed*
room door At the same time ANGELO
and GIORGIO carry in AMY's pathetic

little trunk, which they take into the bedroom)

THE R F D Well, I got my deliveries

FATHER MCKEE I'll come along with you You stay here an' keep things conversational, Joe

JOE No! I'll come, too

THE R F D Till the groom turns up, Joe You don't want her to get all upset again, do you?

FATHER MCKEE (*as AMY comes along the porch to the door*) Shh! Don't get her worryin'

AMY (*in the doorway, finishing the feminine touch of powder to the nose*) I thought a little of this wouldn't make me any harder to look at

THE R F D We'll have to be movin' on, ma'am

FATHER MCKEE Yes

AMY (*shaking hands with him*) I'm pleased to have made your acquaintance

THE R F D I hope to have the pleasure soon again

AMY Why, ain't you coming to the wedding?

THE R F D Sure I am, if I'm invited

AMY I'll never forgive you, if you don't And I certainly want to thank you for the lift (*A handshake to him*) Thank you Good-bye
Good-bye

THE R F D Good-bye, ma'am (*He shuffles out JOE starts to follow*)

AMY You ain't going, too?

JOE Well, I—

THE R F D (*through the window*) Just the Padre an' me

FATHER MCKEE (*as he goes, to JOE*) We'll send him right up

THE R F D (*as they disappear*) Good-bye, ma'am

AMY Good bye See you later (*Awkward silence*) I ain't sorry they went I think they ought to have done it sooner and left us to get acquainted They got me all fussed up staring that way I just couldn't think of what to say next A girl gets kind of fussed, coming off like this to marry a man she ain't never seen I was a mile up in the air I—I guess I must have sounded kind of fresh I wouldn't want you to think I was fresh

JOE I didn't

AMY I'm glad you didn't You know, I like it up here already You got it fixed up so cute and— (*She discovers the cake*) and that It was awful nice of you to think of that And the view! Is them all vines?

JOE Yeah (*An awkward pause*)

AMY It certainly is a pretty sight Coming up I could taste the wind way down inside me It made me think of where I used to live

JOE Where was that?

AMY In the Santa Clara You know, I wrote you

JOE Oh, yeah In the Santa Clara
I forgot

AMY Thought you might have, be-
ing a Catholic and all

AMY We had a big place in the San-
ta Clara Prunes and apricots Ninety
acres in prunes and fifty in apricots
(*Again an awkward silence*) I
guess I'll sit down (*She does so*)
There ought to have been good
money in prunes and apricots But
the prunes didn't do so good and
the apricots got the leaf curl

JOE I was organizer for the Wob-
bles

AMY The Wobblies?

JOE I W W

AMY Say! You ain't one of them?

JOE You're quite a farmer

JOE I used to be

AMY My old man was, but he got to
drinking

AMY I sure am glad you gave that
up You don't talk one bit like an
Italian

JOE That's bad

JOE I ain't Only by descent I was
born in Frisco

AMY So we lost it after my mother
died But I used to love it there In
the spring, when the blossoms was
out, I used to climb up on the wind
mill at night when there was a
moon You never saw such a pretty
sight as them blossoms in the moon-
light You could see for miles and
miles all round—for miles and miles

AMY Oh, in Frisco? I see I'm
Swiss by descent myself My father
was born in Switzerland and my
grandfather, on my mother's side, he
was born there, too I don't know
what that makes me—Swiss cheese,
I guess (*She laughs* JOE does
not *This crushes her and there is
another awkward gap*) Our old
house in the Santa Clara was bigger
than this one, but it wasn't near so
pretty I must say you keep this
house nice and clean for having no
woman around Our house got aw-
ful dirty toward the end You see,
my mother got to drinking, too Hard
stuff, you know I got nothing against
beer or vino, but the hard stuff don't
do nobody any good That
how you stand on prohibition?

JOE It must have been pretty (*Awk-
ward pause*)

JOE Sure, I guess so

AMY Ever been in the Santa Clara?

JOE Sure I worked there before I
come here

AMY Where did you work?

JOE Near Mountain View I forget
the guy's name

AMY I went to school in Mountain
View Our place was near there
Ever know Father O'Donnell?

AMY I'm glad to hear that I sure
am I don't want no more experience
with the hard stuff That cer-
tainly is some view Got the Santa
Clara beat a mile The Santa Clara's

JOE No

so flat You couldn't get no view at all unless you climbed up on that windmill like I told you about Our old house had a cellar Has this house got a cellar?

JOE Sure, it has Underneath the whole house (*She goes to the cellar door to see*)

AMY I used to hide in our cellar when things got too rough upstairs You could hear the feet running around over your head, but they never come down in the cellar after me because *there* was a ladder, and when you're that way you don't care much for ladders They always took it out on me

JOE Did they?

AMY Yeah I always had the cellar though I used to play down there hot days It smelt like apricots

JOE Our cellar smells like hell It's full of vino

AMY That's a nice clean smell It's sour, but it's healthy

JOE You're a regular wop, ain't you?

AMY Well, after two years in a spaghetti joint! I like Italians They always left me alone Guess it wouldn't have done 'em much good getting fresh with me, at that Say, I'm getting pretty confidential

JOE Go right ahead

AMY All right I guess I ain't got much reason for being shy with you, at that I wouldn't never have said I was going to marry an Italian, though But I guess I just jumped at the chance I got so tired of things

Oh, everything! I used to think I just couldn't keep on any longer

JOE Poor kid!

AMY Oh, I usually know which side my bread's buttered on I just said to myself "He looks all right and I like the country and anyway it can't be no worse than this" And I said "Why shouldn't I take a chance? He's taking just as much of a chance on me as I am on him"

JOE That's fair enough

AMY Sure it is And—maybe I hadn't ought to say it—but when I come in here and seen all you done, fixing things up for the wedding and all, and looked out the window, and smelt that wind, I said to myself, I said "Amy, old kid, you're in gravy" Now, what do you think of that for an admission?

JOE You're dead right That's just what I said when I come here I only intended to stay a few days I'm that way, see? I been here goin' on five months now

AMY Is *that* all?

JOE That's the longest I ever stayed any one place since I was old enough to dress myself

AMY You *have* been a rover!

JOE I been all over—with the Wobblies, you see Before I come here, that is

AMY What did you used to do?

JOE Chernes an' hops—melons down in the Imperial an' oranges down South an' 'he railroad an' the oil-

fields Before I come here When I come here I just stayed Maybe I was gettin' tired of bummin' Now I'm tired of this But I don't mind

AMY Well, don't get too tired of it I'm not a bit strong for moving myself I had all I want of that in my time

JOE I guess you have

AMY I wonder what you think of me coming all the way up here like I did all by myself, to marry a man I ain't never seen, only his photograph

JOE You couldn't have picked a better man

AMY Say! Don't get a swelled head, will you?

JOE Who, me?

AMY Oh, no, nobody! (AH CEE passes along the porch) I hope you're right that's all And I guess you are at that And believe me, if I thought this wasn't a permanent offer, I wouldn't be here I mean business I hope you do

JOE Me?

AMY Well, I certainly ain't referring to the Chink

JOE Say, who do you think ?

AMY (touching his sleeve with a kind gentle diffidence which is her first attempt at intimacy) Don't get sore The minute I came in I knew I was all right I am Why, I feel just as comfortable as if we was old friends There don't seem to be anything strange in me being here like I am

Not now, anyhow It just goes to show you you never can tell how things is going to turn out Why, if a fortune-teller had told me that I would come up here like I did, do you know what I would have said to her? I'd have said, "You're no fortune-teller" Life sure is funny, though It's lucky for me I can say that now and laugh when I say it I ain't always been so good at laughing I guess we'll get used to each other in time Don't you think we will, Tony?

JOE Tony? Say, I ain't Oh, Jesus! (His words are lost in the roar of a Ford motor as it approaches, and the motor, in turn, is drowned in wails of dismay from GIORGIO and ANCELO) (The tension between the two in the room is broken by the excited entrance of AH CEE, who has evidently seen, from his kitchen window, the cause of disturbance)

FATHER MC KEE (calling from off stage) Joe! Joe!

JOE (following AH CEE toward the door) What is it? (From the porch he sees what it is) Wh it—Is he dead?

Take that bench! (He disappears in the direction of the disturbance which continues in both English and Italian)

AMY What's the matter? Is somebody hurt?

(The DOCTOR, with his fedora hat and his little black satchel, appears He is the perfect young rural medico, just out of medical school and full of learned importance)

THE DOCTOR I'll get the ambulance

JOE (following him in) Is he bad Doc?

THE DOCTOR (*as he goes into the bedroom*) Both legs above the knee—compound fractures

JOE Why didn't you take him to the hospital?

THE R F D (*as he enters*) The Ford went right off the bridge

FATHER MCKEE (*as he enters*) Not two hundred yards from here, Joe

THE R F D Must have fell twenty feet!

FATHER MCKEE Never seen such a wreck! (*To AMY*) We found him lyin' in two feet of water The car was turned right upside down

AMY But who is it? I don't get it I don't know what's happened

FATHER MCKEE Two broken legs, that's what's happened

THE DOCTOR (*he reappears in his shirt sleeves*) Better lend a hand, Joe! (*He vanishes again* GIORGIO and ANGELO appear, carrying the bench and apostrophizing the deity in Italian TONY is recumbent and unconscious on this improvised stretcher Much "Steady" from JOE Much "There now, Tony" from the R F D Much and prolonged groaning from TONY)

JOE (*as the bench is set down*) All right now, Tony

TONY (*reviving*) Ah-h-h! Ees you, Joe?

JOE Yeah It's me Amy's here

TONY Amy? Ees all right, Joe? You been makin' evrathing all right?

JOE Sure Everything's fine

TONY Where is my Amy? (*He sees her where she stands dumbfounded against the wall*) Ah-h-h, Amy! Amy, don' be standin' way off dere! Come over here for shake hands (*AMY shakes her head*) You ain' mad with me, Amy? (*AMY shakes her head again*) Amy ain' mad with me, Joe?

JOE Nobody's mad Don't you worry

TONY Den we have da weddin' just da same? We have da weddin' just da same? (*The DOCTOR appears in the bedroom doorway, holding a hypodermic*)

JOE Sure we will

THE DOCTOR All right boys, bring him in I want to give him another one of these and clean up his cuts

JOE Come on now, boys! Avanti! Careful there!

TONY Amy! Amy! (*The jar of movement hurts him He breaks down into groans and is carried into the bedroom All others go with him except JOE and AMY*)

JOE (*as he starts to go, a strangled sound from AMY arrests him He turns and meets her gaze He closes the door*) This is tough on you

AMY (*almost voiceless with her terrible surmise*) Who—who is that old guy?

JOE That? That's Tony .

AMY Tony?

JOE It's too bad he never got to meet you It's too bad he wasn't here when you come (*AMY sways desperately a moment, then, with a choked cry, makes for the bedroom*) You can't go in there

AMY I want my trunk

JOE Now, listen! It ain't Tony's fault he's had an accident

AMY Of all the dirty, low-down tricks that was ever played on a girl!

JOE An' it ain't his fault you made a little mistake

AMY What do you think you are—a bunch of Houdinis? (*She tears open her handbag which she put down on the table at her first entrance and produces a photograph*) Is this your photo or isn't it?

JOE (*in amazement*) Where did you get it?

AMY Where do you think I got it?

JOE Good God, Tony didn't send you this, did he? For God's sake, tell me! Did Tony send you this?

AMY Ain't I just told you?

JOE By God, he must have been plumb crazy! By God, he was so dead gone on you he was afraid you wouldn't have nothin' to do with an old man like him He didn't have the nerve An' he just went an' sent you my photo instead of his Tony's like that, Amy He ain't nothing but a kid He's like a puppv, Tony is Honest, Amy, it's God's truth I'm telling you I wouldn't have had nothin' to do with no such thing Honest I wouldn't I

did write the letters for him, but that was only because he don't write good English like I do

AMY That ain't no excuse

JOE But there wasn't one word in them letters that wasn't God's own truth I never knew nothin' about this photo, though Honest to God, I never! An' Tony never meant no harm neither, Amy Honest he never An' he's been after me to beat it, too Every day he has Sure it was a dirty trick an' he was crazy to think he could get away with it I ain't denyin' it's the dirtiest trick I ever heard of Only he didn't mean no harm

AMY Oh, didn't he? Well, how about my feelings? How about me?

JOE I'll do everything I can to square it I'll drive you right down to the station now, and you can hop the first train back

AMY Oh, *can* I? And what do you expect me to do when I get there? Ain't I thrown up my job there? Do you think jobs is easy for a girl to get? And ain't I spent every cent I had on my trousseau?

JOE I'll make Tony square it

AMY Oh, my God! Oh, my God! I got to go back and wait on table! What'll all those girls say when they see me? And I ain't even got the pice of my ticket!

JOE We can fix that

AMY I'll get a lawyer, I will! I wish to God I hadn't never heard of no wops!

JOE Don't start cryin' (He tries to comfort her)

AMY You take your hands off me and get my things

JOE All right (He looks at her a moment, his distress quite evident Then he gives it up and goes into the bedroom As he opens the door, the DOCTOR and RONY are audible He closes the door after him)

(AMY picks up the few belongings she has left about the room She stands a moment holding them, looking about her, at the four walls, at the country outside Then her eye falls upon JOE's photograph which still lies, face-up, on the table She takes it in her hand and looks at it Mechanically she makes as though to put it into the bosom of her dress She changes her mind, drops it on the table and looks around her again)

She seems to reach a decision Her face sets and she pushes the photograph vigorously away from her JOE returns with her satchel)

JOE The doc's give him something to make him sleep They're goin' to get an ambulance an' take him to the hospital We can take the doc's Ford an' It's a shame, but .

AMY I ain't going

JOE What?

AMY No I ain't going Why should I go? I like the country This place suits me all right It's just what I was looking for I'm here and I might as well stick I guess he ain't so bad at that I guess I could have done a lot worse If he wants to marry me, I'm game I'm gune to see it through It's nice up here (She pulls off her hat and sits, exhausted JOE stares in mute admiration as the curtain falls)

ACT TWO

The scene remains unchanged It is late evening of the same day The lanterns out-of-doors have been burning so long that some of them have already guttered out The room is lighted by two oil lamps

TONY lies groaning faintly on a cot, his legs encased in a plaster cast, his eternal wine bottle by his side The DOCTOR sits beside him

Outside, the festa is in full swing A desperate Italian tenor is singing "La Donna è Mobile" from "Rigoletto" as the curtain rises His tones ring frantically out

A short pause follows the song The hiss of a skyrocket is audible The light from the rocket flares through the windows and a long "Ah" rises from the crowd out-of-doors

TONY Fireworks!

THE DOCTOR Lie quiet

TONY Someone verra sick in bed Povereto! Povereto! Tony miss festa (Gay voices outside call to children)

and children answer The doctor rises impatiently and goes to the door TONY turns his head ever so slightly)
 Eh, Doc! W'ere you go?

THE DOCTOR It's high time those coyotes went home

(Applause rings from the crowd The tenor is again vigorously repeating the last phrase and cadenza of "La Donna è Mobile")

TONY Dat fella is no coyot'! He is music artiste

THE DOCTOR It's a marvel to me the man has any lungs left He's been howling for five hours

TONY You don' ondrastan' such music Come è bella! Ees "Rigoletto!"

THE DOCTOR Look here now, Tony! I let you out of the hospital to get married

TONY You bet your life! You think any goddam doc is stoppin' me from gettin married?

THE DOCTOR I'm talking medicine, not love

TONY You talkin' too goddam much You been spoil evrathing

THE DOCTOR Now, be reasonable, Tony I let them bring you in here where you could see your friends

TONY An' den you mak' all my friends go outside

THE DOCTOR You're a sick man

TONY Ah! Tony is verra sick . . verra sick!

THE DOCTOR Enough's enough Why, half of what you have been through to-day would have killed a white man! You wops are crazy

TONY I don't let nobody stop no festa in my house You go outside an' have a good time

THE DOCTOR I don't sing and I don't dance and I don't talk Italian and I don't drink

TONY I'm surpise' how much you don' know, Doc *(He laughs The jar is painful He groans The doctor comes over to his bedside)* W'ere is my Amy?

THE DOCTOR She's all right Keep quiet

TONY You goin' look for my Amy, Doc? You goin' see if she is havin' fine time?
(Mandolins, a guitar, and an accord ion strike up a sentimental waltz outside)

THE DOCTOR If you'll be quiet *(Humoring him, he goes to the door)* I can see her from here and she's having a splendid time Does that satisfy you?

TONY Now evrabody goin' for dance!

(A brief silence filled by the dance music to which TONY, the incorrigible, beats time Then JOE and AH GEE come along the porch pushing a wheelbarrow, a little flurry of the crowd in their wake The doctor shoos out the crowd JOE and AH GEE come in)

JOE How you makin' out, Tony?

TONY Verra sick, Joe Is festa goin' good?

JOE Festa's goin' fine, Tony Me and
Ah Gee's after more vino

TONY Da's good! Da's good!

JOE Sure it's good But it's a wonder
everybody ain't drowned already

TONY Italian fellas don' get
drowned in vino Is my Amy hav-
in' good fun, Joe?

JOE Sure, she is! She's playin' with
the kids

TONY Ah! You go in da cellar
with Ah Gee, Joe, and bring back
playnta vino Den you come back
here and mak' little talk with Tony

JOE That's the idea *(He goes
into the cellar, followed by AH GEE)*

THE DOCTOR *(in the door, a fractious
eye on the festa)* Those mothers
ought to be reported for keeping
youngsters up this time of night
*(A pause filled with voices and
laughter)*

TONY *(crescendo)* Doc! Doc! Doc!
(The DOCTOR turns) You think I
am well next week, Doc?

THE DOCTOR I sincerely hope, Tony,
that you may be well in six months

TONY Six month?

THE DOCTOR You don't seem to real-
ize what a bad smash you had *(As
he sits down to his professional man-
ner)* Both tibia and fibula are frac-
tured in the right leg The femur is
crushed in the left, and the ischium
damaged as well Now, if no systemic
complications develop

TONY Oh, my God!

THE DOCTOR six months . . .

TONY *(crescendo again)* Six month!
Six month! Six month!

THE DOCTOR You won't make it any
shorter by exciting yourself

TONY Da's right, Doc Ees no good
get excit' I ondrastan' But six
month' *(A pause)* Doc, I'm
goin' ask you som'thing an' you goin'
tell me just da truth, eh?

THE DOCTOR I know what's on your
mind, Tony If you keep quiet and
take care of yourself, you'll have all
the kids you want

TONY How many?

THE DOCTOR Ten, anyway!

TONY Three is playnta
*(The music is loud again as JOE and
AH GEE come back from the cellar
with the new barrel of wine They
load it on the wheelbarrow and AH
GEE takes it off to the thirsty popu-
lace JOE remains behind)*

THE DOCTOR In the meanwhile
Amy's going to have her hands full,
taking care of you

TONY *(violently)* I don' marry with
no woman for mak' her work I
don't want my Amy do nothing but
only be happy an' fat

JOE There ain't nothin' too good for
Tony He marnes a fine wife to play
the piano for him an' he's goin' to
rent a trained nurse to take care of
him
(AH GEE is greeted with shouts of

"Vino! Vino!" from the men and
"Viva Antonio" from the girls)

(The crowd outside shouts vociferously)

RONY You bet your life!

JOE I won't keep him up

THE DOCTOR Renting trained nurses
is expensive, Tony.

TONY Just a little w'ile, Doc? Fifteen minute?

TONY I got playnta money
(The concertina and the mandolin
begin playing the chorus of "Funiculi,
Funicula") The music is continued
throughout the following scene)

THE DOCTOR Well, don't make it
any longer I want some sleep myself
Anybody would think I haven't
a thing to do but take care of Tony

JOE We know you're a busy baby,
Doc

JOE (cigarette business) You old son
of a gun! Give us a light, doc

THE DOCTOR Not in here, Joe!
(JOE takes his cigarette outside He
sits with a wave to the crowd, who
answer, "Joel Joel!")

THE DOCTOR Busy is right (Very
expansive) To-morrow, now, I've
got two confinements I'm watching
and an appendicitis, all up on the
St Helena road Then, just the other
side of town, I've got the most beautiful
tumor you could hope to see And
the sheriff's wife! Operated her yesterday
Gallstones Gallstones? They
were cobblestones I never saw such
a case! And then, with my regular
practice and my own scientific
researches to keep up with things

TONY Is my Amy havin' good fun,
Joe?

JOE Sure She's dancin' with the
postman

TONY Corpo Dio, goddam, Doc,
don't be tellin' me no more 'bout who
is sick and w'at he's sick for! I'm
sick playnta myself, an' I got playnta
trouble here You go outside an' leave
me for talk with Joe

TONY Da's good! Ees verra funny
weddin' for me Joe, but my Amy
must have good time

THE DOCTOR Tony's got it bad

JOE Don't blame him She's some
girl

TONY I got to talk verra secret with
Joe, Doc You go outside for talk
with my Amy You better get good
acquaint' with my Amy, Doc
(Applause outside for the dancers)

THE DOCTOR All right, but I won't
have any more nonsense when I
come back (He goes, to JOE on the
porch) I cannot be responsible unless
the patient enjoys complete
quiet, after a shock like this to his
nervous system

JOE You could do worse, an' that's
a fact

JOE Has Tony got a nervous system?

THE DOCTOR Tony's got to go to
sleep

THE DOCTOR Of course he has! (He
disappears A shout welcomes him.)

TONY W'at is nervous system, Joe?

JOE Well, if she was, she got over it.

JOE It's what make things hurt, Tony

TONY W'at I'm goin' to do for mak' evrathing all right, Joe? Da's w'at I want to know

TONY I got playnta

(JOE comes in and stands over TONY for a moment with a look of half-tender amusement on his face TONY hums distractedly keeping time with one hand to the music of "Funiculi, Funicula" With the end of the music he drops his hands with a sigh)

JOE I tell you everythin' is all right, Tony Oh, I ain't sayin' you ain't got to keep things movin' along easy an' friendly an' all But that ain't goin' to be so hard Just be good to her and take care of her That's what Amy needs She's tired, poor kid!

JOE What's on your mind, Tony?

TONY I'm all ready for tak' care like hell

TONY Oh, Joe! Joe! Joe!

JOE What's the matter, Tony Ain't you feelin' good?

JOE From what Amy was tellin' me this mornin', she's been a-havin' a helluva hard life for a girl, an' if she come through straight like she did, well, there ain't no credit due nobody but just only herself, and that's a fact

TONY Ees Amy!

(JOE sits in the DOCTOR'S chair, hitching it closer to the bed)

JOE What do you want for a nickel? She married you, didn't she?

TONY You're a goddam smart fella, Joe

TONY I'm scare', Joe I'm scare' verra bad I love my Amy, but my Amy don' love me

JOE Give her time, can't you? She wouldn't have married you if she wasn't all set to go through on the level

TONY You think?

JOE Hell, I know

TONY W'at Amy say w'en she see me dees morning?

JOE Oh, forget it, I tell you

TONY I got to know, Joe You got to tell me She's pretty goddam mad, eh?

JOE I dunno how smart I am, Tony, but you can't tell me much Not about women, you can't Believe me, a girl gets a lousy deal any way you look at it (He reflects upon this for an instant before he illustrates) Take a fella, now, a young fella like me, see? It's goin' to do him good to knock around an' have his troubles an' all (A solemn shake of the head) But knockin' around just raises hell with a girl She can't stand it She can't stand it, because it ain't in her nature to get away with the whole show like a fella can (TONY is much impressed and signifies approval with a grunt) If a fella wants a meal, he swipes it, don't he? A girl can't be swipin' things It 'ud make her feel bad She'd think she

was doin' somethin' wrong (*This surprises TONY, but he is willing to take JOE's word for it*) Gee, I sure would hate to be a woman!

TONY (*nodding agreement*) Nobody is wantin' to be woman, Joe But es playnta good womans like my Amy!

JOE Sure, there's good ones an' bad ones But that ain't exactly what I mean, Tony What I mean is, as far as I can see, it don't make a helluva lot of difference what a woman is good or bad, young or old

TONY I lik' best fat!

JOE all women is up against it, and it's a dirty shame, too, because women ain't so bad They ain't much use, maybe, but they ain't so bad

TONY My Amy is goin' have evra-thing she want

JOE Ever heard anythin' about this dam' women's rights stuff? You know Equality of the sexes Woman doin' a man's work an' all that bunk?

TONY Da's crazy idea!

JOE The idea ain't so bad

TONY Ees crazy idea! Looka me! You think any woman is goin' be doin' my work? No, by God! I tell you, Joe, woman is best for sit in da house an' love da husband

JOE The trouble with women is, there's too goddam many of 'em Why, I was readin' in the paper only the other day about England havin' three and a half women to every man

TONY W'at you mean?—half a womans!

JOE I'm only tellin' you what the paper said

TONY Ees crazy idea! I half a womans! I tell you, Joe

JOE I been lookin' women over from San Diego to Seattle an' what most of 'em is after is a home A good safe home, whether they get any rights with it or not You take my advice an' make everythin' nice an' comfortable for Amy an' you won't have no trouble Amy's satisfied here Don't you kid yourself she ain't

(*Outside the crowd is off again, the tenors leading them in "Marie Mari"*)

TONY You're a good boy, Joe, you're pretty smart

JOE I'm just tellin' you the truth You're dam' lucky you picked a girl like Amy

TONY (*a moment of comfort, then despair again*) Ees no good, Joe—ees no good

JOE Oh, for cripe's sake, Tony!

TONY I'm tellin' you, Joe, ees no good I'm the most unhappy fella in the world W'y? Because I been verra bad sinner an' God is goin' get me for sure! He's broke both my legs already an' he's not finish' with me yet! God is no cheap fella, Joe God is lookin' out at Tony right now, and you know what he's sayin'? He's sayin' "Tony, you been one goddam sonuvabitch for playin' goddam dirty trick on Amy!" Da's w'at God is sayin', Joe, an' I know verra

good wat God is goin' do more Just for playin' goddam dirty trick like dat on Amy, Tony don' never have no kids, never! W'at you think is mak' me do such a thing, Joe?

JOE Oh, hell, you always was crazy

TONY Ees no good, for such a bad fella like me gettin' marned God is goin' fix me playnta, all right

JOE I seen God let worse guys'n you get by

TONY You think?

JOE If you want to square things, you better make Amy glad you done what you done

TONY You think? Yes
(Pause) Look, Joe (He draws a plush box from under his blanket)
Ees present for Amy You open him

JOE (obeying) Say! Them's what I call regular earnings!

TONY You bet your life! He's cost four hundra dollar!

JOE Are them real diamonds?

TONY (nodding) I guess Amy like 'em pretty good, eh?

JOE She'll be crazy about 'em You're a pretty wise old wop, Tony, ain't you? (He hands the box back to TONY, who laughs delightedly JOE looks at him for a moment then goes to door and calls out) Amy!

TONY Eh, Joe!

JOE You're goin' to make the presentation right away now That'll settle your worries for you Amy, come here! Tony wants to see you!

TONY You think is good time now?

JOE I know Amy?
(AMY appears in doorway She wears her wedding dress and veil The dress is undeniably pretty and only wrong in one or two places The veil has been pulled rather askew The whole picture is at once charming and pathetic)

AMY What's the idea? (Her voice is a little tired She does not look at JOE)

JOE Tony wants you

AMY (she comes in stolidly and takes the chair farthest from TONY's cot She sits there stiffly) Well, here I am

TONY (ultra-tenderly) My Amy is tire!

AMY You don't blame me, do you? I've had quite a day Gee, them kids out there have been climbing all over me

TONY Da's good

AMY Oh, I don't mind kids if they go to bed when they ought to and know how to behave Believe me, if I ever have any kids, they're going to behave

TONY You hear dat, Joe?

AMY I said "if" (A silence) I wouldn't object

TONY (amorously) Amy Come over here

AMY (rising quickly) I guess I ain't so tired I guess I better go back or they'll be wondering what's become

of the blooming bride Some bloom, huh? *(The fireworks hiss and flare again and AMY, very like a little girl, is out on the porch for the delight of seeing them The enthusiasm of the crowd fairly rattles the windows)* They sure do yell out there! When you get enough wops together and put enough vino in 'em, they sure can speak up! I think I'll take off my veil *(She does)* Phew! That thing don't look like no weight at all, but it feels like a ton of bricks

TONY Amy, come over here

AMY I'm all right where I am

TONY Amy!

AMY What?

TONY You like earrings, Amy?

AMY Earrings? I'm human, ain't I?

JOE That's the idea

AMY *(a real snarl)* I didn't speak to you I was addressing Tony

TONY Ah, you call me Tony for da first time!

AMY Expect me to call my husband mister? That'd sound swell, wouldn't it? Tony Short for Antonio Antonio and Cleopatra, huh? Can you beat it? You'll have to call me Cleo

TONY I like better Amy

AMY There ain't no short for Amy It's French and it means beloved Beloved! Can you beat it? The boss in the spaghetti palace told me that the night he tried to give me a twelve-dollar pearl necklace Twelve dol-

lars! He was some sport When he seen I couldn't see it that way, he give it to Blanche She was the other girl that worked there He had a wife and three kids too *(TONY beckons again and AMY takes further refuge in conversation)* I like that name Blanche I used to wish my name was Blanche instead of Amy. Blanche got in trouble Poor Blanchel Gee, I was sorry for that girl!

TONY Come over here, Amy *(He holds out the box)*

AMY What's that?

TONY Ees my present for my Amy,

AMY What you got there, Tony?

TONY For you

AMY Something for me? *(By this time, she has got over to the cot She takes the box)* Honest? Well, now, if that isn't sweet of you, Tony *(She opens it)* Oh! Oh!! Oh!!!

TONY Ees for mak' Amy happy

JOE They're real! Real diamonds!

TONY You bet our life! Forty hundra dollar'

AMY I I *(Tears come)* Real diamonds *(She sits in the DOCTOR'S chair and cries and cries)*

TONY Don' cry, Amy! Don' cry! Ees no' for cry, earrings! Ees for festa! Ees for marryin' with Tony!

AMY I don't know what to say! I don't know what to do!

JOE Put 'em on *(He gets the mirror, brings it over to where AMY sits,*

and holds it for her while she begins to put the earrings on Her sobs gradually subside)

AMY I had another pair once, so I got my ears pierced already Ma pierced my ears herself with a needle and thread Only these kind screw on! Say, ain't they beautiful! My others were turquoises and gold Real turquoises and real gold But these here cost four hundred dollars! Oh, I never dreamed of anything so gorgeous! (She takes the mirror from JOE)

TONY Amy Amy

AMY Can I wear 'em whenever I want?

TONY You can wear 'em in da bed if you want!

AMY Oh, thank you, Tony! (She is just about to kiss him)

JOE Now, everything's fine!

AMY (furiously) Say what's the idea? What have you got to do with this? You're always buttin' in Say (Suddenly she remembers the momentous photograph which still lies on the table) Wait a minute (She picks it up and hands it quite violently to JOE) Here's your picture

TONY (watching in terror) Santa Maria!

AMY Here! You better take it! Take it, I tell you! I don't want it (JOE looks first at the photograph, then at the lady)

JOE I guess you ain't far wrong Amy I hope there ain't no hard feelin's

AMY Why should there be any hard feelings?

TONY Benissimo!

JOE All right Only I didn't want you to think (A long pause)

AMY (very steadily) You ain't got much of a swellcd head, have you, Mr Joe? (JOE's face falls The tension is snapped by a gesture from TONY)

TONY Tear him up, Joe! Tear him up! (JOE obeys)

AMY Now we don't ever have to think of that again

TONY Madonna! Da's verra good

AMY You see, that's the only way to do There ain't no use of keeping things around to remind you of what you want to forget Start in all over again new and fresh That's my way Burn up everything you want to put behind you No reminders and no souvenirs I been doing that regular about once a month ever since I was a kid No memories for me No hard feelings It's a great life, if you don't weaken I guess, if I keep at it long enough, I may get somewhere some day (She turns and deliberately kisses TONY on the brow)

JOE (to TONY) Will that hold you? I guess you don't need to worry no more after that I guess that fixes your troubles for good I guess you better admit I was pretty near right

TONY Now you know for w'y I been wantin' you go away, Joe Dat god-dam picture photograph! But evva

thing is fix' now Evrathing is fine
You don' need go away now, Joe

JOE You don't need me now I guess
I can migrate now You got Amy to
take care of you

TONY No! No! I need you here for
tak' care of my vineyard I don' let
you go away now Amy don' let you
go away now

AMY Is he thinking of going away,
Tony?

TONY He don't go now, Dio mio! Ees
no good Joe goin' away and leavin'
Tony sick in da bed with nobody for
runnin' vineyard!

JOE You'll get somebody

AMY When's he going?

TONY He sry to-morrow You don't
let him go, Amy?

AMY I got nothing to say about it

TONY You hear dat, Joe Amy is ask-
in' you for stay here

AMY (scorn) Yes, I am!

JOE I got to go, Tony I just plain
got to go

AMY If he won't stay for you, Tony,
he won't stay for me It ain't the place
of a lady to be coaving him, anyhow

(She again turns malevolent
attention upon JOE) Where you
headed for?

JOE The next place

AMY What's the idea?

JOE I just got to be on my way, an'
that's all there is to it

TONY Ees all dose goddam Wob-
blies, Amy You tell him stay here
w'ile Tony is so sick in da bed like
dees You don' go to-morrow, Joe
You and me is talkin' more by-an'-
by, in da mornin'

JOE Oh, what's the use? I'm goin',
I tell you

AMY (smiling darkly) It must be
pretty swell, being free and independ-
ent and beating it around the coun-
try just however you feel like sleep-
ing any place the notion hits you,
no ties, work a day and bum a week,
here and there, you and the—what
do you call 'em? Wobblies? Huh! I
never could sec much in it myself
Calling in at farmhouses for a plate
of cold stew and a slab of last Sun-
day's pie Down in the Santa Clara
we used to keep a dog for those boys
I guess it's a fine life if you like it
Only I never had much use for hoboes
myself

TONY Joe ain' no hobo, Amy!

AMY Ain't he?

JOE (completely discomfited) I gues-
s I'll say good-night

FATHER MC KEE (furiously shouting
off stage) You got no business callin'
it sacramental, because it ain't got no
sanction from the Church!

(TONY looks at the pair of them in un-
believing horror JOE starts to go AMY
smiles triumphantly Then the situa-
tion is saved by a tumult of voices and
the porch is suddenly packed with
the guests of the festa men, women,
and children, old and young, fat and
lean They follow THE DOCTOR and
FATHER MC KEE, who are engaged in
a furious argument)

THE DOCTOR Is the Church opposed to the law or is it not?

FATHER MC KEE The Church is opposed to interfering with the divine gifts of Providence

THE DOCTOR (*as he enters*) It's the greatest reform since the abolition of slavery

FATHER MC KEE (*as he enters*) "The ruler of the feast calleth the bridegroom and sayeth unto him 'Every man setteth on first the good wine'"

THE DOCTOR Oh, hell!

FATHER MC KEE You're a godless heretic, young man, or you wouldn't be talkin' such blasphemy! I ain't got no sympathy with drunkenness, but there's plenty of worse things. How about chamberrin? Ain't chamberin' a worse sin than drunkenness? You think you can put a stop to drunkenness by pullin' up all the grapes. I suppose you can put a stop to chamberin' by pulling up all the women!

JOE There's an argument for you, Doc

THE DOCTOR Alcohol is a poison to the entire alimentary system whether you make it in a still or in a wine barrel. It's poison, and poison's no good for any man. As for the Church

FATHER MC KEE (*beside himself*) It ain't poison if you don't get drunk on it, an' you don't get drunk if you're a good Cath'lic!

THE DOCTOR I suppose that drunkenness is confined to such scientific heretics as myself?

AMY You certainly was lappin it up outside, Doc

TONY Don' fight!

FATHER MC KEE You'll have to pardon me, Tony, but when I hear these heretics gettin' full on bootleg liquor and callin' it sacramental! (*The rest of the argument is drowned in the pandemonium of the crowd. At first THE DOCTOR tries to keep them out.*)

THE GUESTS Buona notte! Buon riposo! Evviva Antonio! Tanti auguri! Felice notte! Tante grazie!

JOE Festa's over

THE GUESTS Come sta Antonio? Come vas Voglio veder la padrona! Grazie, Antonio! Buona notte! Tanti auguri! A rivederci!

THE DOCTOR (*to JOE*) Tell them to cut the row!

THE GUESTS Grazie, Antonio! Mille grazie, Antonio! Buona notte, Antonio! Tanti auguri! A rivederci!

THE DOCTOR Keep those wops out of here! There's been enough noise already with this bigoted old soak

FATHER MC KEE You heretical, blasphemous!

TONY Padre, Madonna mia, don' fight no more! (*To the crowd*) Eh!

THE DOCTOR (*still holding the crowd back in the doorway*) No, you can't come in here!

THE GUESTS Sì, sì, dottore! Sì, sì dottore! Prego, dottore!

THE DOCTOR No! Tony's too sick!

TONY Tak' a pinch-a snuff, Doc, an sit down (*The guests surge in as*

TONY *calls to them*) Vieni! Vieni qui!
Venite tutti! Venite tutti!

THE GUESTS Come va? Sta bene?
Sta meglio, Antonio? Ha tanto sofferto, poveretto! Poveretto!

TONY *(picking out a small boy)* Ecco il mio Giovannino! Ah, com'è grande e bello e forte! Quanto pesa?

GIOVANNINO'S MOTHER Ah, sì, è grande, non è vero? Pesa sessanta cinque libbre

TONY Sessanta cinque! *(To AMY)* Amy, looka him! He weigh' sixty-five pound', an' he's only *(To the mother)* Quant' anni?

GIOVANNINO'S MOTHER Soltanto nove

TONY He's only nine year' old an' he weigh sixty-five pound'!

ANOTHER MOTHER Antonio, ecco la mia
(A little girl runs to throw her arms around TONY's neck and kiss him Exclamations of delight)

TONY *(to the mother)* Ah! Come so chiama?

THE SECOND MOTHER Maria Maddalena Rosina Vittoria Emanuela

TONY Maria Maddalena Rosina Vittoria—*(To AMY)* Looka Maria Maddalena! Ah, Maria Maddalena is goin' grow up an' be a fine, beautiful lady like my Amy

GIOVANNINO'S MOTHER E il mio Giovannino! *(To MARIA'S MOTHER)* Santa Madonna! Ella non è più bella che il mio Giovannino!

MARIA'S MOTHER *(furious)* Sì, è più bella! E molto più bella che un ragazzone come questo

GIOVANNINO'S MOTHER Non è ragazzone, senti!

MARIA'S MOTHER Sì! Ma, la mia carina

THE MEN *(hilariously)* Giovannino! Giovannino!

THE WOMEN *(at the same time)* Maria Maddalena! Maria Maddalena!

THE DOCTOR Come on, now, get out! We've had enough of this!

ANGELO and GIORGIO *(facing the howling mob)* Basta! Basta! Via! Vial Fuori! Avanti! Al diavolo!
(Uproar and retreat)

AMY *(on the porch, she stops them)* No, wait a minute! I want to tell 'em all good-night Good-night! Good-night! Thank you I've had the very best wedding that ever was and I'm the happiest girl in the world because you've been so good to me Come back to-morrow and see Tony and tell him all the news Good-night and God bless you

VOICES Siamo molto contenti! Com'è gentile! Com'è bella! Com'è simpatica! Grazie tanto, Amy!

JOE They say thank you and God bless you Beat it, now Buona notte! Run along Come back to-morrow
(As they go down the hill, tenor, concertina, and chorus strike into song)

TONY Oh, Amy, I w'isper in your ear, Amy You ain' goin' be mad with Tony for bein' so crazy-wild with love? You come in da house like da spring come in da winter You come in da house like da pink flower dat

sit on da window sill W'en you come
da whole world is like da inside da
wine cup You ondrastan', Amy? I
canno' help talkin' dees way I got for
tell you, Amy, an' I ain't got no
English language for tell you My
Amy is so good, so prett!' My Amy
(*He fairly breaks down* AMY
pats his hand)

JOE (*to FATHER MCKEE*) Look at
the poor wop (*He is just going*)

THE DOCTOR Don't go, Joe I want
a hand with Tony

FATHER MCKEE Listen (*He
holds up his hand for them to at-
tend to the music He pours wine into
a cup*) Here's to the bridal couple!

JOE (*same business*) Doc?

THE DOCTOR No, thanks

AMY Oh, Doctor!

TONY Doc, you no drink Tony's
health?

THE DOCTOR Oh, all right! (*He
drinks with the others*) Nasty stuff
(*He drains his glass They laugh, all
of them*) Off to bed with you now,
'Tony'

TONY My leg is hurt too much I can-
no' sleep

THE DOCTOR I've got something
that'll make you sleep (*He mixes a
powder in water and presents it to
TONY for consumption*)

TONY Jes' Chris!' I canno' drink
water, Doc! (*With the doctor's con-
sent he adds wine to the draught*)

THE DOCTOR That's right Drink
ap (*The potion is downed*)

TONY Amy, you lookin' sad!

JOE Do you blame her? She's had
some day (*A pat on her shoulder
She shrinks angrily*)

AMY I ain't sad It was a swell
wedding and everybody had a swell
time Hear that? They're still singing.
Ain't it pretty? And I don't want to
hear no more of what the Doc was
telling me outside about bringing a
trained nurse up here from Napa I'm
all the nurse Tony needs, and don't
nobody be afraid of my working, be-
cause there's nothing I like better
And when Tony's good and strong
and don't have to be in bed all the
time, we'll have Giorgio and Angelo
carry him out in the sun and I'll sit
beside him and read the paper out
loud and we'll look at the view and
feel that nice wind and we'll just en-
joy ourselves And the doc'll come up
and see us And the Padre, too, if they
can keep from fighting And if Joe
goes away—why—he goes away, that's
all Don't nobody fret about little
Amy She's going to be all right
(*The DOCTOR and the PRIEST ex-
change approving glances*)

FATHER MCKEE Amy, you're a credit
to the parish

THE DOCTOR (*at the head of the cot*)
Joe, take that end!

TONY (*still spellbound*) My Amy .

AMY Yes, Tony?

TONY I'm sleepy

THE DOCTOR (*as JOE and he lift the
cot*) Not too high

TONY (*groaning, he can still reach to
take his bottle along*) Wait!

JOE Steady! You hold the door,
Padre

He ain't done a bad turn by either
you or Tony

THE DOCTOR Easy now! Not too fast

AMY Watch out for his hand!

AMY I got no kick

(The doctor enters, quietly closing
the bedroom door after him)

THE DOCTOR Take shorter steps, Joe
Every man ought to be taught how
to carry a stretcher Why, when I was
in France (He backs through
the door) Lower your end, Joe! You'll
give him apoplexy

FATHER MCKEE Be patient with
him He's old enough to be your
father, and no man ain't got no busi-
ness marryin' at his age, but he's a
good fella

TONY Oh!

AMY I guess I better go in there now

JOE I got him (He follows
through the door with the foot of the
cot Another groan from TONY AMY
takes a step toward door)

THE DOCTOR (wiping his hands
medically on his spotless handker-
chief) He's asleep I've never known
the like Never in all my years of
practice It's a case that ought to be
written up for the whole, entire medi-
cal profession Both legs broken in
the morning Tibia, fibula, femur,
and ischium X-rayed and set inside
of an hour after the accident Patient
married at noon and survives ten
hours of whooping Dago celebration
with no apparent ill effects

FATHER MCKEE Better give 'em a
minute (He goes into the bedroom
AMY is left alone She stands quite
still for a moment, then, giddily,
drops into a chair FATHER MCKEE
returns)

AMY (grim) Yeah! What do you
want me to do, Doctor?

FATHER MCKEE You're a fine brave
girl

THE DOCTOR Let me send up a nurse
in the morning

AMY Thanks

AMY No

FATHER MCKEE We have our trials,
all of us

THE DOCTOR A man in a cast's a
handful It's going to be a long siege

AMY Sure, I know that

AMY I can manage (Suddenly
desperate) God! I got to have some-
thing to do!

FATHER MCKEE If ever you need a
word of comfort, call on me, my
daughter

AMY Thanks

THE DOCTOR Well (He shrugs
his shoulders) If he wakes up to-
night, give him another one of those
powders in a little wine Wine won't

FATHER MCKEE You may not be a
Catholic, but I'll do my best by you
(AMY smiles wanly) I had my doubts
of this here marriage, but God knows
who's meant for who in this world

harm the drug and the water might kill the patient Eh, Padre?

AMY Is that all, Doctor?

THE DOCTOR That's all I'll come up early in the morning

AMY Thanks

THE DOCTOR Sure about the nurse? *(She nods)* You take it pretty calmly

AMY Ain't much else I can do, is there?

THE DOCTOR Good-night Joe's fixing you up a bed He'll be here if you want him

FATHER MC KEE *(going with the DOCTOR)* I ain't kissed the bride

THE DOCTOR Come on! *(He pushes FATHER MC KEE in front of him and they go off Their voices die away)* *(AMY goes to the table and mechanically removes her earrings AH GEE enters by the outer door with a tray of glasses JOE enters from the bedroom, closing the door carefully after him)*

JOE You turn in, Ah Gee I'm going to sleep in here *(AH GEE goes to his kitchen JOE watches AMY with the same puzzled frown he has worn since she first turned upon him)* Amy *(She stiffens)* I got you fixed up in Tony's big bed I'm goin' to sleep in here in case you want any help

AMY All right

JOE Well, good night *(He goes about making himself comfortable for the night)*

AMY Good-night, Joe

JOE Keep a stiff upper lip Everything's going to turn out O K Good night

AMY You certainly do think you're God Almighty, don't you?

JOE I don't get you

AMY Oh, well, let it go I guess I don't feel so good

JOE *(still busy with his bed)* Maybe it's the vino It don't agree with some folks *(A slight pause)*

AMY I guess I'm just nervous

JOE I'd be nervous myself if I'd just been married

AMY Would you?

JOE If I was a girl, I would

AMY Maybe that's why I'm nervous

JOE Sure it is I often think how it must be for a girl takin' a big, important step like gettin' married Everything new an' diff'rent an' all that

AMY Yeah

JOE But I wouldn't let it worry me if I was you

AMY I won't, Mister Joe *(She takes up one of the lamps)*

JOE That's the idea Good-night

AMY Good-night *(She turns and looks desperately at him)*

JOE Say, look here, Amy

AMY I don't remember of giving you leave to use my Christian name

JOE Excuse me only there's something I just got to say to you before I go away Because I am going I'm going in the morning just as soon as Tony wakes up so's I can tell him good-by But there's something I just got to ask you

AMY What is it?

JOE You like Tony all right, don't you?

AMY I married him, didn't I? And I let him give me jewelry, too, didn't I? A nice, self-respecting girl don't accept jewelry from a man she don't like Not real jewelry

JOE I know that only it ain't just what I mean Because, Tony—oh, he's a nut an' a wop an' all that, but he's just the best old fella I ever knew Regular salt of the earth, Tony is I wouldn't like to see Tony in trouble or unhappy or gettin' his feelings hurt or anything in that line

AMY (*dangerously*) Oh, wouldn't you?

JOE No An' it's all up to you now An' well, you see what a fine old fella he is, don't you?

AMY I ain't been complaining about him that I remember When I start in complaining there'll be plenty of time then for outsiders to butt in and make remarks

JOE Don't get sore

AMY (*fury again*) Who's sore? Say, listen to me I know what I'm about,

see? I married for a home, see? Well, I got a home, ain't I? I wanted to get away from working in the city Well, I got away, didn't I? I'm in the country, ain't I? And I ain't working so very hard, either, that I can notice Oh, I know what's expected of me and I ain't going to lay down on my job Don't you fret You be on your way, and mind your own business

JOE Oh, all right!

AMY I got all I bargained for and then some I'm fixed I'm satisfied I didn't come up here like I did looking for love or anything like that

JOE All I got to say is it's a good thing you got so dam' much sense

AMY I'll thank you not to swear about me, too

JOE You got me wrong, Amy I apologize Maybe I was only seein' Tony's side of the question Some girls would have been sorer'n you was over what old Tony done to get you here But you're a real sport, that's what you are You're a great girl an' I'm all for you (*He emphasizes his approval with another patronizing pat on her shoulder*)

AMY Oh, for God's sake, leave me alone, can't you?

JOE (*who can grow angry himself*) Sure, I can! Good-night!

AMY Good-night! (*She stands quite still, so does he Far, far away the irrepressible tenor resumes "Maria Mari"*)

JOE I'm sleeping in here in case .

AMY There won't be any need of you putting yourself out

JOE How do you know but what Tony

AMY I can take care of Tony and the further off you keep yourself the better I'll be pleased (*Their eyes blaze*)

JOE Well, if you feel that way, I'll go back to my own shack (*He grabs his coat and makes for the door*) That wop'll be singing all night (*He is out on the porch*)

AMY Joe!

JOE What? (*He returns*)

AMY Would you mind waiting just a minute? There's something I got to ask you

JOE Shoot

AMY You got to tell me the truth this time You just got to tell me the truth You really and honestly didn't know nothing about his sending me that photo of you instead of his own, did you? You didn't know nothing at all about that?

JOE Honest to God, I didn't Honest to God

AMY On your sacred word of honor?

JOE Honest

AMY I'm glad And I want to apologize to you for what I said just now and for that other thing I said about your being a common hobo and all I'm sorry, Joe Will you forgive me?

JOE Oh that's all right

AMY I wouldn't want to have you go away to-morrow thinking what a mean character I got

JOE Nothing like that

AMY You mean it?

JOE Shake (*They shake hands, standing in the doorway*) You're crying! What's the matter, kid?

AMY Oh, I don't know Nothing I'm all right

JOE Come on! Don't get upset Just make the best of things

AMY It ain't that

JOE Well, just make the best of things, anyway

AMY I'm trying to! I'm trying to!

JOE (*his hands on her shoulders*) You're married to a good man I know the weddin' was kind of funny with Tony all smashed up an' all But you just hold on a while an' everythin'll be O K You'll see!

AMY I bet all those people are laughing at me

JOE No, they ain't

AMY I bet you're laughing at me

JOE I ain't, Amy I'm sorry

AMY (*moving back from him*). Leave me alone can't you?

JOE (*his voice very low*) Say, you're all right, Amy You're plumb all right

AMY I always was all right till I come up here Now I wish I was dead! I wish I was dead!

JOE Don' talk that way You're all right (Clumsily, he takes her arm She stumbles He catches her There is a moment of silence broken only by their deep breathing as the physical being of one is communicated to the physical being of the other Suddenly and irresistibly he clutches her to his breast and kisses her She struggles a moment, then abandons herself)

TONY (calling out in the bedroom) Amy! (She breaks loose, sobbing hysterically)

JOE (a whisper) Jesus! (She stifles a little cry and runs for the bedroom door) No, you don't (He catches her)

AMY (struggling) Let me go!

TONY Amy! (She breaks free, terrified, and runs out of the house JOE stands listening a moment, then runs after her as the curtain falls)

ACT THREE

The scene is unchanged, but the woman's presence has made itself felt Handsome, though inexpensive, cretonne curtains grace the windows A garish jardinière of porcelain holds a geranium plant and stands upon a colored oriental tabouret The lamps have acquired art shades one of some light-colored silk on a wire form and adorned with roses of the same material in a lighter shade, the other of parchment painted with windmills and Dutch kiddies New pictures selected from the stock-in-trade of almost any provincial "art department" hang upon the walls, one of them, perhaps, a portrait of a well-known lady screen star These have replaced Washington and Garibaldi and the Italian Steamship Company's poster Painted and elaborately befringed leather sofa cushions fill the large chairs It is hoped that one of the variety showing the head of Hiawatha can be secured for this, as they say, "touch" A brilliantly embroidered centerpiece covers the dining-room table and the flowers in the middle are palpably artificial A white waste-paper basket is girt by a cerise ribbon which makes some corner of the room splendid A victrola graces another corner

Three months have passed It is mid-afternoon

An invalid chair has been made by laying a board between the seat of the Morris chair and the top of a box In this TONY reclines, his crutches lying on the floor by his side FATHER MC KEE nods drowsily in another chair JOE sits on the porch rail outside the window perusing the scareheads of an I W W paper

FATHER MC KEE (continuing the discussion) Now, Joe, don't be tryin' to tell me that things is goin' to be any

better for havin' a revolution, because they ain't Gov'ment's always gov'ment no matter what you call it.

an' no particular kind of gover'ment ain't no more'n a label anyway. You don't change nothin' by givin' it a new name. Stick a "peppermint" label on a bottle of castor oil an' then drink it an' see what happens to you. Castor oil happens!

TONY I am work' just as much like Joe an' I don' want changin' nothing

JOE I suppose you both come over here in the first place because you was satisfied with everythin' just like it was in the old country?

FATHER MC KEE Human nature ain't nothin' but human nature an' the only way you ever could make a gover'ment is by obedience. Scalliwagin' around about grievances an' labels don't accomplish nothin'. An' the only way you can make a revolution anythin' but a mess to no purpose is to change the people's ideas an' thank goodness there ain't nobody can accomplish that. It can't be done.

JOE They're changin' already, Padre

FATHER MC KEE I'm talkin' to you with the cassock off, Joe. I'm lettin' you in on the secrets of the Mother Church. She knows the stock of ideas the world over an' she knows they don't never change. The Mother Church just keeps hammerin' an' hammerin' the same old nails because she knows there ain't no new ones worth hammerin'.

TONY People come in da Unita State' because ees good place. I been comin' for mak' money.

JOE You certainly succeeded

TONY You don' ondrastan', Joe. You got crazy idea. I'm comin' here for

mak' money an' you want tak' my money all away.

JOE What's your idea of progress, Padre?

FATHER MC KEE Improvin' yourself! Now, Joe, it comes to my notice that you been 'round here talkin' pretty uppity 'bout the U S gover'ment. 'Tain't no good just makin' slurrin' remarks 'bout the gover'ment when you ain't got the ability nor the power to do nothin' toward improvin' it. You have got the power to do somethin' toward improvin' yourself, but I don't see you doin' it.

TONY W'at I care for gover'ment? Peoples is tellin' me king is no good an' freedom is verita fine. W'at I care for king? W'at I care for freedom? Evrbody say dees gover'ment is bad for havin' proibish'. I say proibish' mak' me dam' rich. Evra man got his own idea w'at is good for evrbody else.

JOE You're a bloomin' capitalist, that's what you are!

TONY You mak' me tire', Joe. Evra minute talkin' 'bout Russia. Russia. Tak' a pinch-a snuff an' shut up!

JOE Russia's got the right idea

FATHER MC KEE Now, listen to me, young man. If you had the energy an' the reverence for authority and the continence that Tony has, you wouldn't be carryin' on 'bout no revolutions in Russia. 'Tain't sense. I've read a plenty of your radical literature an' if you ask me, it's just plain stupid. I may be a priest an' I may be a celibate, but that don't make me no less of a man. An' no real man ain't

never got no use for carryin' on You radicals, Joe, you're always an' forever hollerin' an' carryin' on 'bout your rights How 'bout your duties? There ain't no one to prevent your doin' your duties but you ain't never done 'em in your life

JOE I'm savin' my duties for the brotherhood of man

TONY Dio mio!

FATHER MC KEE You're talkin' a lot of balderdash Mind your own business an' leave the brotherhood of man to me Brothers is my job

TONY You think evrbody's goin' be brother like dat an' don' scrap no more? Ees crazy idea! You ain' got no good sense, Joe, you an' does goddam Wobblies

FATHER MC KEE I been mullin' this over in my mind, Joe, ever since Tony asked me to come up an' talk to you An' I come to the conclusion that capital an' labor'll go on scrap-pin' to the end of time and they'll always be a certain number of people that'll stand up for the underdog I been standin' up for the underdog all my life

JOE (*indignant, he comes into the room*) Y'cs, you have! A helluva lot of standin' up you ever done for anybody but yourself!

TONY (*talking at the same time*) Now, Joe, don' you be gettin' fresh! You listen to w'at da Padre's sayin'!

FATHER MC KEE (*talking at the same time*) but I learned a long time ago that the dog on top needs just as much standin' up for as the other

kind and I ain't got much use for either of 'em because both of 'em's always complainin' an' carryin' on

TONY I been 'Merican citizen for twent' year I been vote evra year—some times two times Ees fine thing, vote! I like He mak' me feel like I am good man an' patriotic fella But w'at I know 'bout vote? I don't know nothing I don' care nothing You think you know so much, eh? You want for change evrathing an' w'en you got evrathing change' like you want, some other fella is comin' for changin' you Ees no good (*A defiant look about him*) You look-a me an' do like I done You marry with good wife like my Amy an' live quiet in a fine house an' gettin' rich like me an' an' an' raisin' playn-ta kids like I am goin' do Da's w'at is for life Not for runnin' evra place, goddam to hell gover'ment with goddam Wobblies!

JOE Now you got Tony goin' or kids again I sure am catchin' all that's comin' my way But, just the same, I'm goin' to take my trip to Frisco an' see what's what

FATHER MC KEE Well, Joe, I can understand your wantin' to shake the dust of this place off'n your feet But I got to tell you that the adventures of the spirit is a great deal more interestin' than the adventures of the flesh No man can't do no more'n 'bout six things with his flesh But he can have a heap of fun with his immortal soul

TONY Joe is dam' lucky havin' good job here Last time he talk 'bout goin' away, he tak' my advice an' stay here for runnin' da vineyard Dees time he better tak' my advice some more

(FATHER MC KEE is fingering JOE's papers ominously)

JOE I'll just trouble you for them papers, Padre

FATHER MC KEE If you take my advice you'll burn 'em

TONY Joe don' mean no harm

JOE Maybe I don't mean nothin' at all Maybe I'm just restless an' rarin' to go I read these things an' they make me think A man ought to think if he can Oh, not tall talk Just what he could be doin' himself I think how I could get into the scrap I ought to have been in on the dock strike at San Pedro, but I wasn't I don't want to miss another big fight like that, do I? You fellows don't understand, but that's the way it is An' maybe you're right an' I'm wrong I can't help that Maybe when I get down to Frisco I'll hear the same old bull from the same old loud-mouths, just like it used to be Maybe I'll get disgusted and beat it south for the orange pickin's, or maybe go back on the railroad, or maybe in the oilfields But, what the hell! I been hangin' around here on the point of goin' for three months now I might just as well pick up and clear out to-morrow or the day after I'll come back some day, Tony Anyway, there ain't no use of expectin' anythin' out of a guy like me Don't get sore What the hell!

TONY You goin' in da jail, sure!

JOE I could go worse places A guy went to jail up in Quincy, in Plumas County, awhile back, for carryin' a Wobbly card—like this one, see? (He displays the famous bit of red cardboard) His lawyer pleads with the

judge to go easy on the sentence "Your honor," he says, "this chap served in France an' won the Croy de Gaire an' the Distinguished Service Cross" An' right there the guy jumps up an' says 'Don't you pay no attention to that stuff,' he says "I don't want no credit for no services I ever performed for no gover'ment that tells me I got to go to jail to stand up for my rights"

FATHER MC KEE Do you want to go to jail?

JOE There's worse places, I tell you I been there before, too That guy in Quincy got the limit an' I'd like to shake hands with him, I would Tony says this is a free country Well, Tony ought to know He's a boot-legger

TONY (indignantly) Hah!

JOE What I say is about the only freedom we got left is the freedom to choose which one of our rights we'll go to jail for

FATHER MC KEE (super-sententiously) Joe

TONY Shhh! Here's Amy!

AMY (off stage) Ah Gee!

(JOE rises, FATHER MC KEE pauses in his harangue, TONY beams, AMY enters She wears a bright dress and a red straw hat which pushes her hair down about her face A duster swings dashingly from her shoulders Her market basket hangs from her arm She has stuffed some late lupin in the top of it)

AMY Scrapping again, are you? What's the matter, this time? Has

Joe got another attack of the foot-itch? *(She sets the basket down on the table, doffs hat and duster, and, as she does so, sees JOE's papers)* Oh! So that's it *(Patiently JOE folds the papers up)* See them, Tony? *(She exhibits the lupin and begins to stuff it into the vase with the artificial flowers)* Ain't they sweet? They're so pretty they might be artificial

FATHER MC KEE We been talkin' bout reformin' the social system

AMY Well, you got a fine day for it *(She hugs TONY's head and lets him pat her hand)* Ain't the doctor come yet?

TONY Doc don' come to-day

AMY Sure he does

JOE He comes on Thursday

FATHER MC KEE To-day's Wednesday

AMY Well, I never! Here they are reforming the world and they don't even know what day of the week it is Ain't men the limit?

TONY Nobody is so smart like my Amy *(With a toss of her head she swirls off into the kitchen)*

AMY Don't let me stop you! Go right ahead *(In the kitchen)* Ah Gee Oh, there you are

FATHER MC KEE Thursday! It's my day to talk to the boys down at the parish school

JOE Hand 'em what you just been handin' me, Padre

FATHER MC KEE What I told you was confidential, Joe I'm sorry you won't listen to it

AMY *(she returns, carrying a dish with apples and a knife)* See them Tony?

TONY Apples!

AMY Guess what for?

TONY Apples pie?

AMY *(she sits beside TONY and falls to on the apples)* Well, the world may need reforming but I got no luck The grapes is near ripe and ready for picking The nights is getting longer, the mornings is getting colder, and Tony's getting better Down town they're putting up the posters for the circus and I hear the show's going into winter quarters just the other side of Napa I guess that's all the remarks I got to make now

JOE Here's the doc, now . . .
(A Ford motor)

THE DOCTOR *(off stage)* Hello!

AMY Yoo hoo!
(The DOCTOR appears, shakes hands with AMY, nods to JOE and the PADRE, and then he comes in to TONY)

THE DOCTOR Well, how do the crutches go?

AMY Just fine

TONY You want see me walkin', Doc?

THE DOCTOR Perhaps, I do Let's see.
(He feels the injured legs)

THE DOCTOR Joe

JOE What is it?

THE DOCTOR I hear you're going away

JOE Yeah I'm really goin' this time

THE DOCTOR Where to?

JOE Search me Frisco first

THE DOCTOR Hadn't you better take Amy with you? *(He turns then and looks sternly into joe's startled eyes)*

JOE What?

THE DOCTOR You heard me

JOE I don't get you

THE DOCTOR Amy came to see me last week I didn't tell her what the trouble was I didn't have the heart I put her off Oh, it's easy to fool a woman But you can't fool a doctor, Joe *(A step nearer joe and eyes hard on his face)* Tony isn't the father He couldn't be *(A long pause)*

JOE *(under his breath)* Oh, Christ!

THE DOCTOR I thought so *(Another long pause)* I've been trying to figure out how to make things easiest for Tony It upset me a good deal Doctors get shocked more often than you'd think And a girl like Amy, too I didn't know what to do I guess it's up to you

JOE Poor old Tony!

THE DOCTOR You might have thought of him sooner—and of Amy, too, for that matter

JOE It wasn't on purpose It was only once! But—honest to God, we wouldn't either of us have put any thing like that over on old Tony Not for a million dollars!

THE DOCTOR You couldn't have wasted much time about it

JOE It was the first night

THE DOCTOR Good Lord!

JOE It just happened There was a reason you don't know about I'm a swell guy, ain't I? To do a thing like that to a fellow like Tony

THE DOCTOR Shall I tell Tony? Or Amy?

JOE No Gimme time to think

THE DOCTOR There's no concealing this Don't try anything of that sort I won't have it

JOE No

THE DOCTOR This is going to come near killing him

(JOE nods fearsomely The doctor turns and is going when AMY appears, marshalling ANGELO and GIORGIO)

AMY Just cut out the welcome to our city stuff and carry this chair down there under the arbor where the boss is *(As they pick it up, she turns to the doctor)* Say! You'd think to hear 'em that Tony'd just been raised from the dead *(She turns back to the two Italians)* Put it in the shade Mind that varnish, you club-footed wops There

(She has seen the chair safely along the porch She returns and makes for the bedroom, saying, as

she goes) He wants a cover and everything you can think of

THE DOCTOR (to JOE) Let me know if I can do anything

(AMY returns carrying a great, thick quilt She cuts for the door, muttering happily to herself On the porch she stops to call through the window to the stricken JOE)

AMY Joe—just hand me them newspapers, will you?

JOE (obeying) Here

AMY (in the doorway her arms filled with papers and comforter, she sees his face) Gee—you look something fierce

JOE (in a strangled voice) Amy

AMY What is it?

JOE I got to see you by an' by I got to see you alone (She starts to speak He sees that he has frightened her) God damn oh, God damn

AMY What's the matter with you? What you scaring me this way for?

JOE Amy Just a minute ago

AMY Make it snappy I don't like this being alone with you It makes me think I want to forget all that

JOE Yeah An' me that's what I mean

AMY What?

JOE (after an awful pause) You're goin' to have a kid (She stares in-

credulously at him without making a sound) Yeah It's so, Amy

I'm awfully sorry The doc just told me He found out when you was sick last week He knows all about it

AMY (She stands a moment without moving at all Suddenly she lets quilt and papers slip to the floor and her hands clasp themselves over her abdomen) Oh, my God! (She picks the quilt and papers up very carefully and puts them on the table She drops weakly into one of the chairs as though her knees had failed her, her face rigid with terror)

JOE I know how it is Just keep your head, now

AMY What am I going to do?

JOE I got to think

AMY If you go wrong, you're sure to get it sooner or later I got it sooner

JOE That kind of talk won't help any

AMY I'm glad of it It serves me right

JOE There's ways, you know there's doctor

AMY (shakes her head vigorously) Them kind of doctors is no good

JOE But maybe

AMY They're no good I'm too far gone anyway I know and anyway doing that It's worse than the other

JOE I'm sorry, Amy

AMY You being sorry ain't got nothing to do with it, either I'm thinking of Tony

JOE So'm I

AMY Tony's a white guy if he is a wop

JOE Yeah.

AMY (*desperately loud*) What am I going to do? What am I going to do?

JOE Hey! Not so loud!

AMY But I ain't got no money . only my earrings

JOE I got money enough

AMY You?

JOE Tony made me save it It's in the bank More'n two hundred bucks That'll see you through

AMY Tony'll be crazy Tony'll be just crazy

JOE The doc said for me to take you away with me

AMY You?

JOE Yeah An' believe me, Amy, I'll do anything

AMY Going away with you won't help things any

JOE I'll treat you right, Amy

AMY Poor Tony!

JOE I'll do the right thing if it kills me

AMY I must have been crazy that night

JOE We both was but there's no use sayin' that now

AMY No Tony'll be crazy (*She lifts her head, recognizing the inevitable*) I guess the doc's right I guess I'll have to go with you Somebody's got to help me out There ain't nobody but you

JOE That's all right I'm willing

AMY And afterwards Oh, my God! And Tony'll be thinking that all the time you and me

Oh! (*This is an exclamation of unutterable disgust*) Poor Tony! You don't know how good he's been to me And all the time he was so crazy for a kid Oh, I can't stick around here now! I got to go I got to go quick

JOE I'm ready, if you are

AMY I'll just pack my grip

JOE Don't take it too hard, Amy (*He tries to take her hand*)

AMY (*shaking him off*) None of that! I don't want no sympathy

JOE Excuse me

AMY You better get your own things

JOE All right I'll be back in a minute

AMY I'll get a move on, too (*AH GEE comes in with the dishes for dinner and begins to lay the table Apparently JOE thinks of something more to say, but is deterred by AH GEE's presence He goes quickly*)

AMY *hears AH GEE and watches him for a moment as though she were unable to understand what he is doing*)

AH GEE *(as he puts down dishes)*
Velly good dinner tonight, Missy
Beans an' roas' veal an' apple pie!

TONY *(calling from off stage)* Eh, Joe! Eh, JOE! W're you go like dat? Amy! W're are you, Amy? *(He comes up on to the porch)* Ah! Here you are!

AH GEE Oh, Bossy! Velly good dinner tonight Apple pie!

TONY *(pleased)* Ah! Apples pie! *(AH GEE goes into his kitchen TONY leans against door)* Amy! W'y you no' come back?

AMY *(who has been clinging desperately to the back of a chair)* I don't know!

TONY You leave me alone so long

AMY I just come in for the papers and

TONY An' Joe is runnin' crazy, wild an' don' say nothing w'en I'm askin' him, "Joe, w're you goin' like dat?"

AMY Joe's going away

TONY He's no' goin' without sayin' goo'-by?

AMY I dunno Maybe he is

TONY That boy mak' me verra unhappy I been lovin' Joe like he was my own son an' he's goin' away like dat He's no good

AMY People who ain't no good ain't worth worryin' about The thing to do is let 'em go and forget 'em

TONY Da's no' so easy like you think, Amy I been lovin' Joe like my own son

AMY Joe ain't no worse than other people I could mention

TONY I love Joe but he don' love me

AMY I love you, Tony! I love you!

TONY I know, Amy, I know

AMY And you ain't never going to believe that I do again

TONY W'at you talkin' 'bout, Amy?

AMY Something's happened, Tony!

TONY Eh?

AMY It's going to make you terrible mad

TONY Amy!

AMY *(nervin' herself)* It's going to make you just crazy, but I'm going to tell you just exactly what it is, Tony, because I ain't going to have you thinking afterwards that I wasn't grateful or that I ain't been happy here happier than I ever been in my whole life

TONY Amy!

AMY Wait a minute I got to confess, Tony I got to tell you the whole business so's you won't be thinking I been any worse than just what I have

TONY Amy!

AMY Yeah And I don't want you blaming Joe no more'n what you blame me and anyway you're a-bound to find out sooner or later, an' it'll hurt you a lot less in the long run if I tell you the truth right now, and I got to tell you the truth anyway I simply got to Wait a minute, Tony! I'm going to tell you the truth and after I go away and you don't see me no more you can say "Well, she wasn't no good but it wasn't my fault" Because it wasn't your fault, Tony Not one bit, it wasn't You didn't have nothing to do with it And I wouldn't be going away, neither, not for a million dollars I wouldn't, only for what's happened

TONY Amy, w'at you talkin' 'bout goin' away?

AMY That's what I'm trying to tell you, Tony, only you got to give me a chance because it ain't easy to tell you no more'n it's easy to go away And I got to go But it ain't because I don't love you I do And it ain't because I don't appreciate all you done for me I ain't never going to forget none of it, nor you, nor this place

TONY Amy!

AMY Listen to me, Tony! You're going to kick me out when you hear what I got to say, but I don't care if you do I'm going to have a baby, Tony and it's God help me! it's Joe's baby

TONY (*raising his crutch with a great cry of anger*) Ah!

AMY Didn't I tell you you'd kick me out?

TONY (*faltering*) Dio mio! Dio mio! No! Amy, you fool with me? Eh?

AMY No, I'm not fooling It's so. And that's why I'm going away, Tony

TONY (*pursuing her as she retreats*). You been Joe's woman!

AMY I was crazy!

TONY You been Joe's woman!

AMY I was crazy!

TONY. You been lovin' Joe!

AMY No I ain't I ain't I never loved Joe Honest, I never I was crazy

TONY You been just like da Padre say you was You been a whore

AMY I ain't! I ain't! I been straight all my life! Only that one night

TONY W'at night?

AMY The first night I come here

TONY Da night you marry with me!

AMY I ain't even spoke to Joe alone since that night

TONY You lyn'!

AMY I swear to God I ain't! Not once! Not till to-day after the doc told him what was going to happen

TONY You lyn' to me! You been Joe's woman!

AMY I ain't, Tony! That's what I'm trying to tell you It's the truth I'm

trying to tell you and now I'm going away

TONY You goin' away with Joe?

AMY My God, what else can I do?

TONY (*furiously he forces her back into the corner where the shotgun is hanging, spluttering all the time with slobbering, half-intelligible rage*) I don' let you go! I don' let you go! Bv God, I'm goin' kill dat Joe! Questo bastardo, Joe! I'm goin' kill him an' keep you here for see me kill him! Goddam you! You goddam dirty (*He has got the gun down, broken it, and is loading it*)

AMY (*speaking at the same time*) No, you won't, Tony! Don't do anything like that, now, Tony! You'll be sorry if you do! You know what'll happen to you if you do that! You know what'll happen to you, Tony! That ain't no way to act! You'll see what you get! You'll see!

TONY Goddam! You wait, you dirty (*He flourishes the broken gun. She covers her eyes with her hands. JOE arrives, sees what TONY is doing, gives a cry, springs on him, wrenches the gun away. The struggle upsets TONY's balance and he topples headlong off his crutches. AMY screams*)

AMY Oh, his leg! (*JOE drops the gun and bends over him*)

JOE I tried to catch him (*TONY's bellows are terrifying to hear*) Did you hurt yourself, Tony? (*TONY's answer is untranslatable into speech*)

AMY (*as she pulls a chair over*) For God's sake, pick him up, can't you?

JOE (*TONY fights him, trying to choke him, and sinks into the chair, howling with pain and fury*) All right now, Tony! Steady!

AMY Tony Tony (*She kneels down by him. TONY's roars subside into moans*) I had to tell him! Oh, my God! I just had to tell him!

JOE He didn't hurt himself much (*TONY's moans break into sobs*)

AMY This is awful

JOE Get your things. Let's pull out of here. We can send the Padre up to look after him.

AMY I'm only taking my little grip, Tony. I'm leaving the earrings on the dresser (*She goes quickly into the bedroom. TONY's sobs keep up wretchedly and terribly*)

JOE Tony, I (*Again TONY springs madly at JOE's throat. JOE wrenches away and runs quickly to the table where he gets a glass of wine which he brings back to TONY. TONY pushes it away, spilling the wine over his shirt. JOE drops the glass*)

TONY Amy! Amy! Amy! Amy!

AMY (*she comes back, with her hat on and her coat over her arm. She has her yellow grip half open with clothes sticking out. JOE takes it from her*) Here I am, Tony. Here I am.

TONY W'ere you goin' Amy? W'ere you goin' away from here?

AMY I dunno Frisco, I guess.

TONY (*bitter sobs*) You goin' be livin' with Joe?

AMY (*vague misery*) I dunno
No, I ain't going to live with Joe
No matter what happens, I ain't

TONY Who is goin' be lookin' after
you, Amy?

JOE I am, Tony I'll do the right
thing if it kills me

TONY You? You? Oh, Dio
mio! Dio mio! No! No!

JOE Come on, Amy, for the love of
Pete!

AMY I'm coming

TONY (*a hand out to stop her*) You
ain' got no money, Amy

AMY It don't matter

TONY Yes!

JOE I got plenty

TONY No! No! No!
Joe is no good for lookin' after wo-
mans an' baby!

AMY Don't take on, Tony Please
don't take on! Let me go, and forget
all about me There ain't no use in
talking any more

TONY You goin' have baby!

AMY God, I know I am!

TONY How you goin' mak' money
for keep him? Before you go, you
tell me dat!

AMY God knows I don't

TONY Pretty quick Joe is leavin' you
desert, and den w'at is goin' hap-
pen?

JOE I swear I'll stuck, Tony!

TONY No! No! NO!! Ees no good!
My Amy havin' baby in da street
Ees no good

AMY Don't say that for God's sake,
Tony, don't say that

TONY W'at is goin' happen, Amy?
W'at's goin' happen with you?

AMY Joe I can't stand no more
of this

TONY (*frenzied*) No! No! NO!!
NO!!!

AMY Let go Tony! Let go of my
skirt!

TONY You ain' goin', Amy! I don't
let you go! You stayin' here with
Tony!

AMY Don't talk that way, Tony! It
ain't no good

TONY No! No! You goin' listen to
w'at Tony say now You goin' lis-
ten, Amy You don't love Joe You
love Tony You been good wife,
Amy

AMY Good wife!

TONY W'at is Tony goin' do with-
out you?

JOE Come on!

TONY Amy, I get excite' just now,
Amy Excuse! Excuse! I think verra
good once more You ain' goin' with
Joe You stayin' here with Tony just
like nothin' is happen', an' by an' by
da little fella is come

AMY Don't talk that way, Tony!

TONY *W'y not?*

AMY Because I ain't no way to talk!

TONY Yes, yes Ees good sense! Ees w'at is ev'rabody wantin' here! You an' Joe an' me! Looka Joe Joe is wantin' go with Wobblies, eh? With goddam Wobblies All right Looka Amy Amy is wantin' 'tay here nice an' safe in dees fine house with Tony Is not true, eh? *(AMY nods through her tears)* Sure is true Look Tony, Dio mio, an' ask him w'at he want? Don' he want baby?

AMY But not this baby, Tony?

TONY W'at I care?

AMY But, think of what people would say!

TONY W'at I care w'at ev'rabody say? We tellin' ev'rabody he's Tony's baby Den ev'rabody say Tony is so goddam young an' strong he's break both his leg' in' havin' baby just da same! Ees good, eh? You don' go with Joe now, Amy? Oh, Amy!

AMY *(he has swayed her, but she looks at him as at a madman)* No It wouldn't work, Tony You wouldn't mean it afterward You're crazy

TONY *(a last frantic appeal)* No! No! No! *(Leaning back in his chair and looking around the room)* W'at's good for me havin' dees fine house?

W'at's good for me havin' all dis money w'at I got? I got nobody for give my house an' my money w'en I die Ees for dat I want dis baby, Amy Joe don' want him Ees Tony want him Amy, Amy, for God's sake don' go away an' leave Tony!

AMY But, Tony! Think of what I done?

TONY What you done was mistake in da head, not in da heart Mistake in da head is no matter

AMY You—you ain't kiddin' me, are you? You're serious, ain't you—Tony? You'll stick to this afterwards, won't you, Tony? *(She walks slowly over to him. She throws her arms around his neck and presses his head against her breast. A prolonged pause)* Well, Joe, I guess you better be going

JOE You mean?

AMY I guess you'd better be going *(JOE straightens in great relief)*

JOE All right *(He picks up his knapsack which he dropped when he came in)* I guess you're right *(He pulls on his cap and stands a moment in the doorway, a broad grin spreading over his face)* I guess there ain't none of us got any kick comin', at that No real kick *(He goes out slowly)*

AMY *(lifting her face)* No *(TONY clutches her even closer as the curtain falls)*

The Front Page

BY BEN HECHT AND
CHARLES MAC ARTHUR

TO
MADISON AND CLARK STREETS

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The Front Page was first produced at the Times Square Theatre, New York City, by Jed Harris, on August 14, 1928, and closed on April 13, 1929. Following is the original cast:

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------|
| WILSON, <i>American</i> | Vincent York |
| ENDICOTT, <i>Post</i> | Allen Jenkins |
| MURPHY, <i>Journal</i> | Willard Robertson |
| McCUE, <i>City Press</i> | William Foran |
| SCHWARTZ, <i>Daily News</i> | Tammany Young |
| KRUGER, <i>Journal of Commerce</i> | Joseph Spurr-Calleia |
| RENSINGER, <i>Tribune</i> | Walter Baldwin |
| MRS. SCHLOSSER | Violet Barney |
| WOODENSHOES FICHORN | Jay Wilson |
| DIAMOND LOUIS | Eduardo Cianelli |
| HILLY JOHNSON, <i>Herald-Examiner</i> | Lee Tracy |
| JENNIE | Carrie Weller |
| MOLLY MALLOY | Dorothy Stickney |
| SHERIFF HARTMAN | Claude Cooper |
| PEGGY GRANT | Frances Fuller |
| MRS. GRANT | Jessie Cromette |
| THE MAYOR | George Barbier |
| MR. PINCUS | Frank Conlan |
| EARL WILLIAMS | George Leach |
| WAITER BURNS | Osgood Perkins |
| CARL, A DEPUTY | Mathew Cromley |
| FRANK, A DEPUTY | Gene West |
| A POLICEMAN | Larry Doyle |
| A POLICEMAN | George T. Fleming |

Staged by George S. Kaufman

Setting by Raymond Sovey

SCENE

The scene is the Press Room in the Criminal Courts Building, Chicago

ACT ONE

Eight-thirty o'clock on a Friday night

ACT TWO

Shortly afterward

ACT THREE

A few minutes later

THE FRONT PAGE

ACT ONE

This is the press room in the Criminal Courts Building, Chicago, a chamber set aside by the City Fathers for the use of journalists and their friends

It is a bare, disordered room, peopled by newspapermen in need of shaves, pants pressing and small change. Hither reporters are drawn by an irresistible lure, the privilege of telephoning free

There are seven telephones in the place, communicating with the seven newspapers of Chicago

All are free

An equally important lure is the continuous poker game that has been going on now for a generation, presumably with the same pack of cards

Here is the rendezvous of some of the most able and amiable bums in the newspaper business, here they meet to gossip, play cards, sleep off jags and date up witnesses between such murders, fires, riots and other public events as concern them

The furniture is the simplest, two tables, an assortment of chairs, spit toons and wustie baskets, a water cooler, etc—two dollars worth of dubious freewood all told

There is one elegant item however, a huge, ornate black walnut desk, the former property of Mayor Fred A. Busse, deceased about 1904. It now belongs to ROY BINSINGER, feature writer for the Chicago Tribune and a fanatic on the subject of hygiene

Despite MR. BINSINGER's views, his desk is the repository for soiled linen, old sandwiches, empty bottles and other items shed by his colleagues

The two tables serve as telephone desks, gaming boards and (in a pinch) as beds of honour

The electric lights are naked of shades

The walls unpainted since the building was erected in 1885, sport a frieze of lithographs, hand painted studies, rotogravure cuttings and heroic pencil sketches, all on the same theme—Woman. The political unrest of the journalists is represented by an unfavorable picture of Kaiser Wilhelm II hand drawn

At the stage left is a door, labelled "Gents"

At the back is a double door, opening on the main corridor of the building

At the stage right are two high, old-fashioned windows overlooking the Cook County jail

It is eight-thirty at night

Four men are playing poker at the main table in the center of the room. They are MURPHY of the Journal, ENDICOTT of the Post, SCHWARTZ of the News and WILSON of the American, four braves known to their kind as police reporters. Katatonic, seedy Paul Reveres, full of strange oaths and a touch of childhood

Off by himself in a chair sits ERNIE KRUGER, a somnolent reporter for the

Journal of Commerce ERNIE is gifted beyond his comrades He plays the banjo and sings He is dreamily rendering his favorite piece, "By the Light of the Silvery Moon," as the poker game progresses

MC CUE of the City News Bureau is telephoning at BENSINGER's desk through the gamblers' chatter He is calling all the police stations, hospitals, etc on behalf of his companions, in a never-ending quest for news His reiterations, whined in a manner intended to be ingratiating, have in them the monotonous bally-hoo wail of the Press

And so

THE CARD PLAYERS Crack it for a dime By me I stay Me too I'm behind again I was even a couple of minutes ago Papers? Three Two Three to the dealer

MC CUE (*into phone*) Kenwood three four hundred (*Another telephone rings*) Hey, take that, one of you guys Ernie, you're not doing anything (*They pay no attention*) With a sigh, MC CUE props one telephone receiver against his ear, reaches over and answers the other phone) What's the matter with you guys? Are you all crippled or something? (*Into second phone*) Press room! (*Suddenly he gives attention to the first phone*) Hello, Sarge McCue Hold the line a minute (*Back to second phone*) No I told you it was the press room (*Flangs up, takes first phone again*) Anything doing, Sarge? All right Thank you, Sarge (*Hangs up*)

THE CARD PLAYERS What are you waiting for? How'd I know you were out? Two Johns Ladies, etc

MC CUE Robey four five hundred

MURPHY Ernie! Take that mouth organ in the can and play it! (*The music swells a little in reply*)

ENDICOTT These cards are like wash-rags

WILSON Let's chip in for a new deck

SCHWARTZ These are good enough —I'm eighty cents out already!

MC CUE (*into phone*) Is this the home of Mrs F D Margolies?

MURPHY I'd like a deck with some aces in it

MC CUE (*cordially, into phone*) This is Mr McCue of the City News Bureau Is it true, Madame, that you were the victim of a Peeping Tom?

KRUGER Ask her if she's worth peeping at

WILSON Has she got a friend?

MC CUE (*into phone*) Now, that ain't the right attitude to take, Madame All we want is the facts Well, what did this Peeping Tom look like? I mean, for instance, would you say he looked like a college professor?

ENDICOTT Tell her I can run up for an hour

KRUGER I'll accommodate her if she'll come down here

SCHWARTZ By me

MC CUE (*into phone*) Just a minute, Madame Is it true, Mrs Mar-

gories, that you took the part of Pocahontas in the Elks' Pageant seven years ago? Hello (*To the others*) She hung up

MURPHY The hell with her! A dime (*The fire-alarm box, over the door, begins to ring*)

ENDICOTT Where's that fire?

WILSON Three-two-one!

SCHWARTZ Clark and Erie

KRUGER (*wearily as he strums*) Too far

MC CUE (*into phone*) Harrison four thousand

SCHWARTZ (*rises, stretching, ambles over and looks out the window*) Oh, Christ!—what time is it, anyway?

WILSON Half past eight (*Rises, goes to the water cooler*)

MURPHY (*drawing cards*) One off the top

WILSON How's the wife, Ed? Any better?

SCHWARTZ Worse

WILSON That's tough

SCHWARTZ Sitting here all night, waiting for 'em to hang this bastard! (*A gesture toward the jail*)

KRUGER It's hard work, all right.

MC CUE (*into phone*) Hello, Sarge? McCue Anything doing? Yeah? That's swell (*The players pause*) A love triangle, huh? Did he kill her? Killed em both!

Ah! Was she good looking? (*A pause With vast disgust*) What? Oh, Niggers! (*The players relax*)

KRUGER That's a break

MC CUE No, never mind—thank you, Sarge (*Jiggles receiver*) Englewood, six eight hundred (*The Examiner phone rings It is on the main table* ENDICOTT answers)

ENDICOTT (*into phone*) Criminal Courts press room No, Hildy Johnson ain't here Oh, hello, Mr Burns No, he ain't here yet, Mr Burns (*Hangs up*) Walter Burns again Something must have happened

SCHWARTZ I'm telling you what's happened Hildy quit

MURPHY What do you mean, quit? He's a fixture on the Examiner

KRUGER Yeh! He goes with the woodwork

SCHWARTZ I got it from Bert Neeley I'm telling you—he's gettin' married

MURPHY Walter wouldn't let him get married He'd kidnap him at the altar

MC CUE (*into phone*) Hello, Sarge McCue Anything doing?

ENDICOTT Remember what he did to Bill Fenton, when he wanted to go to Hollywood? Had him thrown into jail for arson

MURPHY Forgery

MC CUE Shut up! (*Into phone*) Anybody hurt? Oh, fine! What's

his name? Spell it S
C Z J Oh, the hell
with it (*Hangs up*)

ENDICOTT A guy ain't going to walk out on a job when he's drawing down seventy bucks a week

SCHWARTZ Yeah? Well, if he ain't quit, why ain't he here covering the hanging?

MC CUE (*into phone*) Give me rewrite

ENDICOTT Walter sounded like he was having a hemorrhage

MC CUE (*into phone*) Hello, Emil Nothing new on the hanging But here's a big scoop for you

SCHWARTZ I wish to God I could quit

KRUCER You'd think he'd come in and say goodbye

MURPHY That Swede bastard!

MC CUE Shut up, fellas (*Into phone*) Ready, Emil? (*He intones*) Dr Irving Zobel—Z for Zebra—O for onion—B for baptize—E for anything and L for Lousy—

CARD PLAYERS Pass By me
Crick it for a dime Stay

MC CUE (*into phone*) Yes, Zobel! That's right! With offices at sixteen-o-eight Cottage Grove Avenue Well, this bird was arrested to night on complaint of a lot of angry husbands They claim he was treating their wives with electricity for a dollar a smack

MURPHY Is the Electric Teaser in again?

MC CUE (*intoning into phone*) He had a big following, a regular army of fat old dames that was being neglected by their husbands So they was visiting this Dr Zobel in their kimonos to get electricity

ENDICOTT I understand he massages them too

MC CUE (*into phone*) Anyhow, the Doctor is being held for mal-practice and the station is full of his patients who claim he's innocent But from what the husbands say it looks like he's a Lothario All right (*Hangs up, jiggles receiver*)

MURPHY Hey, Ernie, why don't you go in for electricity instead of the banjo?

(BENSINGER enters *He is a studious and slightly neurotic fellow who stands out like a sore thumb owing to his tidy appearance*)

KRUCER It's got no future

MC CUE (*into phone*) Sheridan two thousand

BENSINGER (*with horror*) What the hell, Mac! Is that the only telephone in the place?

MC CUE It's the only one with a mouthpiece on it (*This is true*)

MURPHY (*putting down his hand*) Read 'em and weep (*Takes the pot Prepares to deal*)

BENSINGER (*howling*) How many times have I got to tell you fellows to leave my phone alone? If you've got to talk through a mouthpiece go buy one, like I did!

MURPHY Aw, shut up, Listerine

MC CUE (*at another phone*) Sheridan two thousand

BENSINGER My God, I'm trying to keep this phone clean and I'm not going to have you fellows coughing and spitting in it, either, or pawing it with your hands!

SCHWARTZ What is this—a hospital or something?

ENDICOTT How's that pimple coming along, Roy?

BENSINGER (*pulling a suit of dirty underwear from a drawer of his desk*) And you don't have to use this desk for a toilet!

MURPHY Yeah? Well, suppose you quit stinking up this place with your God-damn antiseptics for a change! (*Removing a mouldy piece of pie from a desk drawer*)

BENSINGER (*wailing*) Ain't you guys got any self respect?

MC CUE (*into phone*) Hello, Sarge!

McCue Congratulations on that Polack capture, Sarge. I hear you're going to be promoted. Anything doing?

THE CARD PLAYERS Nickel Up
a dime Drop Stay

MC CUE (*into phone*) Yeah? Just a second, Sarge (*To the players*) Nice little feature fellows. Little kid, golden curls, everything, lost out near Grand Crossing. The cops are feeding her candy.

MURPHY What else are they doing to her?

MC CUE Don't you want it?

SCHWARTZ No!

ENDICOTT Stick it!

WILSON All yours (*Starts to deal a new hand*)

MC CUE (*into phone*) Never mind, Sarge. Thank you, Sarge. (MC CUE hangs up)

SCHWARTZ Anything new on the hanging, Bensinger?

WILSON (*dealing*) My deal, ain't it?

MURPHY Hey! Zonite!

BENSINGER What is it?

MURPHY Question before the house. Gentleman wants to know what's new on the hanging.

BENSINGER Nothing special.

KRUCER (*with a yawn*) Did you see the sheriff?

BENSINGER (*bitterly*) Why don't you get your own news?

KRUCER (*philosophically*) Somebody ought to see the sheriff.

ENDICOTT Anyhow, this looks like the last hanging we'll ever have to cover.

SCHWARTZ Yeah. Can you imagine their putting in an electric chair? That's awful.

ENDICOTT Going to toast them, like Lucky Strikes.

MURPHY Who opened?

SCHWARTZ What's the matter? Got a hand?

(MRS SCHLOSSER enters. She is the wife of HERMAN SCHLOSSER, of the Examiner. MRS S once used to go to dances, movies and ice cream parlors and she is still pretty, although shop-worn. If she is a bit acidulated, tight-lipped and sharp spoken, no one can blame her, least of all these braves of the press room, who have small respect for themselves or each other as husbands, fathers and lovers.)

ENDICOTT (as guiltily as if he were the errant MR SCHLOSSER) Hello, Mrs Schlosser. Herman hasn't been in yet.

MC CUE Hello, Mrs Schlosser. Have you tried the Harrison Street Station? (Helpfully) He may be sleeping in the squad room.

SCHWARTZ (bitterly) What became of that rule about women coming into this press room?

MURPHY Yeah—I don't let my own wife come in here.

MRS SCHLOSSER (inexorably) Did he have any money left when you saw him?

MC CUE Well, I didn't exactly see him. Did you, Mike?

ENDICOTT No, I didn't really see him either.

MRS SCHLOSSER (like twenty wives) Oh, you didn't? Well, was he still drinking?

MC CUE (with unconvincing zeal) I tell you what, I'll call up the grand jury room if you want. Sometimes he goes to sleep up there.

MRS SCHLOSSER Don't trouble yourself! I notice Hildy Johnson ain't here either. I suppose the two of them are out sopping it up together.

SCHWARTZ Now, you oughtn't to talk that way, Mrs Schlosser. Hildy's reformed—he's gettin' married.

MRS SCHLOSSER Married? Well, all I can say is, God help his wife!

MURPHY Come on—are we playing cards or aren't we?

MRS SCHLOSSER I suppose you've cleaned Herman out.

WILSON (a nervous husband in his own right) Honest, Mrs Schlosser, we ain't seen him.

MRS SCHLOSSER (bitterly) He can't come home. I kept dinner waiting till eleven o'clock last night and he never even called up.

ENDICOTT Well, why pick on us?

KRUCER Yeah—we're busy. (A phone rings.)

ENDICOTT (answering it) Press room!

MRS SCHLOSSER You know where he is. You're covering up for him.

MC CUE Honest to God, Mrs Schlosser—

ENDICOTT (into phone) No. Mr Burns, Hildy ain't showed up yet.

MRS SCHLOSSER Is that Walter Burns? Let me talk to him!

ENDICOTT (*into phone*) Just a minute, Mr Burns Herman Schlosser's wife wants to talk to you

MRS SCHLOSSER (*taking the phone, honeyed and polite*) Hello, Mr Burns

MURPHY Come on—who opened?

ENDICOTT Check it

MURPHY A dime

MRS SCHLOSSER This is Mrs Schlosser Oh, I'm very well, thank you Mr Burns, I was just wondering if you knew where Herman was He didn't come home last night, and you know it was pay day (*Tearfully*) But it won't be all right I'm going crazy

I've done that, but the cashier won't give it to me So I thought maybe if you give me some sort of order—oh, will you Mr Burns? That's awfully nice of you I'm sorry to have to do a thing like that, but you know how Herman is about money Thank you ever so much (*Hangs up turns on the reporters nervously*) You're all alike, every one of you! You ought to be ashamed of yourselves!

MURPHY All right, we're ashamed (*To WILSON*) A dime's bet

MRS SCHLOSSER Sitting around like a lot of dirty, drunken tramps! Poker! (*She grabs MURPHY's cards*)

MURPHY (*leaping up in fury*) Here! Gimme those! What the hell!

MRS SCHLOSSER You know where he is, and I'm going to stay right here till I find out!

MURPHY He's at Hockstetter's, that's where he is! Now give me those cards!

MRS SCHLOSSER Where?

WILSON The Turkish Bath on Madison Street!

ENDICOTT In the basement!

MURPHY Give me those!

MRS SCHLOSSER So! You did know (*MURPHY nervously awaits his cards*) Liars! (*She throws the cards face up on the table*)

MURPHY (*as she throws them*) Hey! (*They spread out on the table*)

MRS SCHLOSSER You're a bunch of gentlemen I must say! Newspaper-men! Burns! (*Exits*)

MURPHY (*almost in tears*) Look! The second straight flush I ever held

ENDICOTT Jesus!

MURPHY Eight, nine, ten, jack, and queen of spades If I was married to that dame I'd kick her humpbacked

BENSINGER (*having cleansed his telephone with a dab of absorbent cotton and a bottle of antiseptic into phone*) City Desk!

ENDICOTT (*gathering the cards together*) I don't know what gets into women I took Bob Brody home the other night and his wife broke his arm with a broom

BENSINGER (*having collected his notes, and thoroughly protected himself from contagion by wrapping a piece of paper around the handle of*

his telephone) Shut up, you fellows! (Into phone) This is Bensinger Here's a new lead on the Earl Williams hanging Yeah, I just saw the sheriff He won't move the hanging up a minute I don't care who he promised All right, I'll talk to him again, but it's no use The execution is set for seven o'clock in the morning

KRUGER (to the tune of "Three O'Clock in the Morning", sings) Seven o'clock in the morning—

BENSINGER Shut up Ernie (Into phone) Give me a rewrite man

KRUGER (morose) Why can't they jerk these guys at a reasonable hour, so we can get some sleep?

BENSINGER (to the room) I asked the sheriff to move it up to five, so we could make the City Edition Just because I asked him to, he wouldn't

MURPHY That guy wouldn't do anything for his mother

KRUGER He gives a damn if we stay up all night!

ENDICOTT You've got no kick coming I've had two dinners home in the last month

982849

BENSINGER (into phone) Hello Jake? New lead on the Williams hanging And listen—don't put Hartman's name in it Just say "the Sheriff" (The reporters listen) Ready? The condemned man ate a hearty dinner Yeah, mock turtle soup, chicken pot pie, hashed brown potatoes, combination salad, and pie a la mode

KRUGER Make mine the same

BENSINGER (into phone) No—I don't know what kind of pie

MURPHY Eskimo!

MC CUE (wistfully) I wish I had a hamburger sandwich

BENSINGER (into phone) And, Jake, get this in as a big favor The whole dinner was furnished by Charlie Apfel Yeah—Apfel A for adenoids, P for psychology, F for Frank E for Eddie, and L for—ah—

MURPHY Lay an egg

BENSINGER Proprietor of the Apfel—wants-to—see—you—restaurant

WILSON That means a new hat for somebody (A soft cadenza from the banjo)

MURPHY I better catch the fudge, fellas (Without dropping his cards, MURPHY picks up a telephone He pantomimes for three cards)

BENSINGER (into phone) Now here's the situation on the eve of the hanging The officials are prepared for a general uprising of radicals at the hour of execution, but the Sheriff still refuses to be intimidated by the Red menace

MURPHY (into his phone, while accepting three cards) Give me a rewrite man, will you? Yeah Some more crap on the Earl Williams hanging

BENSINGER (into phone, as the reporters listen) A double guard has just been thrown around the jail, the municipal buildings, railroad terminals, and elevated stations Also, the Sheriff has just received four more

letters threatening his life He is going to answer these threats by a series of raids against the Friends of American Liberty and other Bolshevik organizations Call you later (*Hangs up*)

SCHWARTZ Bet a dime

MURPHY (*into phone*) Ready? Sheriff Hartman has just put two hundred more relatives on the payroll to protect the city against the Red army, which is leaving Moscow in a couple of minutes (*Consults his hand*) Up a dime (*Back to phone*) And to prove to the voters that the Red menace is on the square, he has just wrote himself four more letters threatening his life I know he wrote them on account of the misspelling

ENDICOTT Drop

MURPHY (*into phone*) That's all, except the doomed man ate a hearty dinner As follows Noodle soup, rustiff sweet a potat', cranberry sauce, and pie a la mud

SCHWARTZ I raise another dime

MURPHY (*consults his cards*) Wait a minute Up again (*Back to phone*) Statement from who? The Sheriff? Quote him for anything you want—he can't read (*Hangs up*)
BENSINGER's phone rings

THE CARD PLAYERS Call Three bullets Pay at this window Shuffle that deck I get the same hand every time

BENSINGER (*answering his phone*) What? (*To MC CUE, as SCHWARTZ starts to shuffle*) Didn't you send that in about the new alienist?

MC CUE (*flat on his back on the smaller table*) I got my hands full with the stations

BENSINGER (*into phone*) All right, I'll give you what I got Dr Max J Eglehofer From Vienna There's a dozen envelopes on him in the morgue Well, he's going to examine Williams at the request of — ah — wait a minute — (*Shuffles through his notes*)—the United Federation for World Betterment

KRUGER I'm for that

BENSINGER Sure—He's one of the biggest alienists in the world He's the author of that book, "The Personality Gland"

MC CUE And where to put it

BENSINGER (*modestly into phone*) He just autographed it for me

MURPHY Did he bite his initials in your pants, too? Nickel

KRUGER (*into phone lazily*) Give me the City Desk!

BENSINGER (*into phone*) All right He's going to examine him in about fifteen minutes I'll let you know (*He hangs up and resumes his study of "The Personality Gland"*)

KRUGER (*very tired*) Kruger calling! Nothing new on the hanging

SCHWARTZ Say, how about roodles on straights or better? I want to get some of my dough back

WILSON Hey, I thought we weren't going to give them alienists any more free advertising

ENDICOTT That's the fourteenth pair of whiskers they called in on this God-damned case

MURPHY Them alienists make me sick All they do is goose you and send you a bill for five hundred bucks

MC CUE (*into phone*) This is McCue Looks like the hanging's coming off at seven all right Yeah, the Governor's gone fishing and can't be found No, fishing (*From the direction of the jail comes a sudden whirr and crash*) They're testing the gallows now Yeah —testing 'em, with sandbags Maybe you can hear 'em (*He holds up phone towards window and laughs pleasantly Then, bitterly*) What? The same to you! (*Hangs up Another whirr and crash*)

SCHWARTZ I wish they'd quit practicing It makes me nervous

WILSON Up a dime

KRUGER (*yelling out of window*) Hey Jacob! Quit playing with that gullus! How do you expect us to do any work?

VOICE FROM JAIL YARD Cut that yelling, you God damned bums!

MC CUE Ain't much respect for the press around here (*The fire alarm sounds the same number as before*)

MC CUE That's a second alarm, ain't it?

MURPHY Who cares?

KRUGER (*motionless*) Probably some orphanage

MURPHY Maybe it's another cat-house Remember when Big Minnie's burned down, and the Mayor of Galesburg came running out? (*A phone rings*)

THE CARD PLAYERS Dime I call Two sixes, etc

MC CUE (*answering phone*) What? The Mayor's office! (*To the rest*) Maybe a statement

KRUGER Tell 'em we're busy

MC CUE (*into phone*) Hello (*Then exuberantly*) Hello, you God-damn Swede! (*To the others*) It's childv

MURPHY What's he doing in the Mayor's office?

MC CUE (*into phone*) What? What's that? What? (*To the others*) He's stunk! (*Into phone*) What are you doing with the Mayor?

MURPHY If he's got any left tell him to bring it over

MC CUE (*into phone*) Huh? Kissing him good-bye?

ENDICOTT Tell him to come over and kiss us

MURPHY I'm getting ready

MC CUE (*into phone*) Well hurry up (*To the room*) He's stepping high

MURPHY What did he say?

KRUGER Is he coming over?

MC CUE That's what he said

THE CARD PLAYERS Pass By me Take a deal, etc

(WOODENSHOES EICHHORN enters He is a big, moon-faced, childish and incompetent German policeman)

BENSINGER Hello, Woodenshoes Got any news?

WOODENSHOES (solemnly) I just been over to the death house Did you hear what Earl Williams said to the priest?

ENDICOTT Aw, forget it!

MURPHY The paper's full of the hanging now We ain't got room for the ads

BENSINGER (looking up from his book) What did he say, Woodenshoes?

WOODENSHOES (awful) He says to the priest that he was innocent

MURPHY Do you know any more jokes?

WOODENSHOES Well, I'm just telling you what he says

MURPHY I suppose that copper committed suicide Or maybe it was a love pact

WOODENSHOES Well, Williams has got a very good explanation for that

ENDICOTT (derisively to the reporters) He'll start crying in a minute (To WOODENSHOES) Why don't you send him some roses, like Mollie Malloy?

SCHWARTZ Yeah She thinks he's innocent, too

WOODENSHOES You fellas don't understand He admits killing the

policeman, but he claims they're just using that as an excuse to hang him, on account he's a radical But the thing that gets me—

MC CUE Before you go on, Woodenshoes, would you mind running down to the corner and getting me a hamburger sandwich?

WOODENSHOES (patiently) Personally, my feeling is that Earl Williams is a dual personality type on account of the way his head is shaped It's a typical case of psychology (*The card game goes on*) Now you take the events leading up to the crime, his hanging a red flag out of the window on Washington's Birthday That ain't normal, to begin with The officer ought to have realized when he went up there that he was dealing with a lunatic I'm against having colored policemen on the force, anyway And I'll tell you why—

ENDICOTT (suddenly) Make that two hamburgers, will you, Woodenshoes, like a good fellow?

WOODENSHOES (hurt) I thought you fellas might be interested in the psychological end of it None of the papers have touched that aspect

MURPHY (profound, but casual) Listen, Woodenshoes, this guy Williams is just a bird that had the tough luck to kill a nigger policeman in a town where the nigger vote is important

KRUGER Sure! If he'd bumped him off down South they'd have given him a banquet and a trip to Europe

MC CUE Oh, the South ain't so bad How about Russia, where they kill

all the Jews and nobody says anything?

MURPHY Williams was a bonanza for the City Hall. He gets hung—everybody gets elected on a law and order platform.

ENDICOTT "Reform the Reds with a Rope."

(WILSON makes an unprintable sound)

MURPHY When that baby drops through the trap tomorrow, it's a million votes. He's just a divine accident. Bet a dime.

WOODENSHOES (*blinking through the above*) That's it—an accident. He didn't know it was a policeman, even. Why, when this officer woke him up—

MC CUE (*tolerantly*) Sure. You're right, Woodenshoes. And ask 'em to put a lot of ketchup on one of them sandwiches, will you?

WILSON (*sore*) I haven't filled a hand all night.

(DIAMOND LOUIE a ham gunman, enters. He is sleek, bejeweled, and sinister to everybody but the cabaleros of the press room who knew him when he ran a fruit stand. He is greeted with unction.)

LOUIE Hello, fellows.

SCHWARTZ Well, well, well! Diamond Louie!

MURPHY If it ain't the Kid himself! Oooh! Look at the pop bottles!

MC CUE Hurry up, Woodenshoes! I'm starving!

KRUGER Get one for me, Woodenshoes!

BENSINGER Make mine a plain lettuce—on gluten bread.

WOODENSHOES (*blinking*) Where am I gonna get the dough for all these eats?

MC CUE Charge it.

MURPHY You got a badge, ain't you? What's it good for?

WOODENSHOES (*shuffling out*) Four hamburgers and a lettuce.

DIAMOND LOUIE Where's Hildy Johnson?

ENDICOTT (*rudely*) Up in Minnie's room.

MURPHY Who wants to know?

KRUGER Say Louie, I hear your old gang is going to bump off Kinky White.

DIAMOND LOUIE (*with sinister reticence*) Is that so?

MURPHY Better wait till after election or you won't make the front page.

ENDICOTT Yeah. We had to spike that Willie Mercer killing.

DIAMOND LOUIE Well, I'll tell you. I'm off that racket. I don't even associate with them fellas, any more.

MURPHY Go on! You gotta kill somebody every day or you don't get any supper.

DIAMOND LOUIE No No kiddin' I'm practically retired, you know what I mean?

SCHWARTZ Retired from what? You never carried anything but a bean blower!

DIAMOND LOUIE All joking aside Honest I'm one of you fellas now I'm in the newspaper game

MURPHY (*with scorn*) You're what?

ENDICOTT He's gettin' delusions of grandeur

DIAMOND LOUIE Yeah That's right I'm a newspaperman working for Walter Burns

WILSON What!

ENDICOTT (*very politely*) What you doin' for Burns? A little pimping?

MURPHY He's marble editor

DIAMOND LOUIE (*with dignity*) I'm assistant circulation manager for de nort' side

WILSON Got a title and everything

ENDICOTT Burns'll be hiring animal acts next

SCHWARTZ What d'ye want Hildy for? Tailing him for Walter?

ENDICOTT What do you know about that, Louie We hear he's quit the Examiner

MC CUE Yeah What's the dope, Louie?

DIAMOND LOUIE Well, I don't think it's permanent, you know what I mean?

SCHWARTZ What the hell happened?

ENDICOTT They must of murdered each other, the way Walter sounded

DIAMOND LOUIE Naaaa! Just a little personal argument Nothin' serious

MC CUE Come on what's the dirt?

DIAMOND LOUIE I don't know a single thing about it

MC CUE Should we tell Hildy you were lookin' for him?

DIAMOND LOUIE (*with affected nonchalance*) No Never mind (*Again the whirr and crash of the gallows, LOUIE looks*) What's that?

ENDICOTT They're fixin' up a pain in the neck for somebody

DIAMOND LOUIE (*with a genteel lift of his eyebrows*) Hah! Mr Weel iams!

MURPHY They'll be doing that for you some day

DIAMOND LOUIE (*very flattered*) Maybe (*To the players*) Well—keep your eye on the dealer (*He starts to leave*)

MURPHY (*turning from the card game for the first time*) Wait a second, Louie (*DIAMOND LOUIE pauses politely*) Come here (*As DIAMOND LOUIE approaches*) Where do you keep your cap pistol? Here? (*He gooses DIAMOND LOUIE*)

DIAMOND LOUIE (*with a leap*) Hey! For God's sake! Look out, will you!

Jesus, that's a hell of a thing to do!
(*He exits angrily*)

ENDICOTT (*calling after him*) Call again, Louie

MURPHY Any time you're in the building

KRUEGER And don't bump off anybody before election day

MURPHY (*sadly*) Louie hasn't got much self control

ENDICOTT What do you know about Hildy? Looks like he's quit, all right

WILSON Yeah What do you think of that?

ENDICOTT There won't be any good reporters left after awhile

MURPHY (*gently*) No Mossie Enright getting stewed and falling down the elevator shaft And poor old Larry Malm

SCHWARTZ And Carl Pancake that disappeared (*A phone rings*)

ENDICOTT (*answering it*) Hello Oh hello, Mr Burns Why, he was in the mayor's office a few minutes ago

(*HILDY JOHNSON enters. He is a happy-go-lucky Swede with a pants-kicking sense of humor. He is barbered and tailored like a normal citizen—a fact which at once excites the wonder and mirth of his colleagues. HILDY is of a vanishing type—the lusty, hoodlumesque half-drunk caballero that was the newspaperman of our youth. Schools of journalism and the advertising business have nearly extirpated the species. Now*

and then one of these boys still pops up in the profession and is hailed by his editor as a survival of a golden age. The newspapermen who have already appeared in this press room are in reality similar survivals. Their presence under one roof is due to the fact that Chicago is a sort of journalistic Yellowstone Park offering haven to a last herd of fantastic bravos that once roamed the newspaper offices of the country. MR JOHNSON carries a new suitcase, two paper parcels and—a cane! A rowdy outburst follows his entrance)

MURPHY (*loudly*) Ooh! Lookit the cane! What are you doing? Turning fairy?

MC CUE Yum, yum! Kiss me!

WILSON Where the hell you been?

ENDICOTT Walter Burns on the wire, Hildy

HILDY What's that?

MC CUE What's the matter, Hildy? My God! He's got a shave!

SCHWARTZ Jesus! Look at the crease in his pants!

ENDICOTT It's Walter Burns, Hildy Will you talk to him for God's sake?

HILDY Tell that paranoiac bastard to take a sweet kiss for himself! Come on Ernie! (*Sings "Good-bye, Forever"*)

ENDICOTT Say, listen, Hildy Will you do me a personal favor and talk to Walter? He knows you're here

MC CUE He's calling up about nine million times

KLUGER All we do is answer that God-damn phone

MURPHY What's the matter? Scared of him?

HILDY I'll talk to that maniac—with pleasure (*Into phone, with mock formality*) Hello Mr Burns What's that, Mr Burns? Why, your language is shocking, Mr Burns

Now, listen, you lousy baboon Get a pencil and paper and take this down Get this straight because this is important It's the Hildy Johnson curse The next time I see you—no matter where I am or what I'm doing—I'm going to walk right up to you and hammer on that monkey skull of yours until it rings like a Chinese gong

MC CUE Oh, boy!

ENDICOTT That's telling him!

HILDY (*holding sizzling receiver to the nearest reporter*) Listen to him! (*Into phone*) No, I ain't going to cover the hanging! I wouldn't cover the last supper for you! Not if they held it all over again in the middle of Clark Street Never mind the Vaseline, Jocko! It won't do you any good this time! Because I'm going to New York like I told you, and if you know what's good for you you'll stav west of Gary, Indiana! A Johnson never forgets! (*He hangs up*) And that, boys, is what is known as telling the managing editor (*The reporters agree loudly*)

BENSINGER Can't you guys talk without yelling?

HILDY (*his song rising again*) "Goodbye, Forever!"

VOICE (*from jail yard*) Hey, cut the yodeling! Where do you think you are!

HILDY (*moving toward the window, takes out his pocket flask*) Hey, Jacobi! Pickle-nose! (*He takes a final drink from the flask, then aims and throws it out the window A scream of rage arises from the jail yard*)

HILDY (*smiles and salutes his victim*) On the button! (*Turns to ERNIE, resumes his song*)

BENSINGER (*pleading*) Oh, shut up!

WILSON What did you quit for, Hildy?

SCHWARTZ We hear you're going to get married?

HILDY I'm getting married, all right (*Shows tickets*) See that? Three tickets to New York! Eleven-eighteen to-night!

WILSON Tonight!

MC CUE Jesus, that's quick!

MURPHY What do you mean three?

HILDY Me and my girl and her God damn ma!

ENDICOTT Kinda sudden, ain't it?

SCHWARTZ What the hell do you want to get married for?

HILDY None of your business!

MURPHY Ooooh! He's in love! Tootsie-wootsie!

MC CUE Is she a white girl?

ENDICOTT Has she got a good shape?

WILSON Does Walter know you're getting married?

HILDY Does he know I'm getting married? He congratulated me! Shook hands like a pal! Offered to throw me a farewell dinner even

ENDICOTT That's his favorite joke—farewell dinners

MURPHY He poisons people at them

HILDY He gets me up to Polack Mike's—fills me full of rotgut—I'd have been there yet if it hadn't been for the fire escape!

SCHWARTZ That's what he done to the Chief of Police!

HILDY Can you imagine? Trying to bust up my marriage! After shaking hands! (Anxiously) Say, my girl didn't call up, did she, or come in looking for me? What time is it, anyway?

SCHWARTZ Quarter past nine

MC CUE Eighteen minutes after

HILDY (starting to take off his coat) I got to be at this house at seven

ENDICOTT What house?

HILDY Somebody giving a farewell party to my girl

WILSON At seven tonight?

HILDY Yeah?

MURPHY You got to run like hell

HILDY Oh, that's all right Fellow doesn't quit a job every day Espe-

cially when its Walter Burns The lousy baboon—

ENDICOTT When's the wedding, Hildy?

HILDY It's in New York, so you guys ain't going to have any fun with it None of them fake warrants or kidnapping the bride, with me! (HILDY folds his old shirt and puts it in BENSINGER's drawer)

BENSINGER Aw, for God's sake! Cut that out! (Throws the shirt on the floor)

WILSON Everybody's getting this New York bug It's just a rube town for mine

SCHWARTZ I was on a New York paper once—the Times You might as well work in a bank

MURPHY I hear all the reporters in New York are lizzies

MC CUE Remember that fellow from the New York World?

ENDICOTT With the derby?

MURPHY (presumably mimicking a New York journalist) Could you please instruct me where the telegraph office is? (Makes a rude noise) You'll be talking like that, Hildy

HILDY Yeah?

ENDICOTT Which one of them sissy journals are you going to work for?

HILDY None of them! Who the hell wants to work on a newspaper? A lot of crummy hoboes, full of dandruff and bum gun they wheedle out of nigger Aldermen

MURPHY That's what comes of stealing a cane.

ENDICOTT What are you going in for—the movies?

HILDY I am not Advertising business One hundred and fifty smackers a week

MC CUE Yeah?

ENDICOTT One hundred and fifty what?

SCHWARTZ (*a sneer*) A hundred and fifty!

HILDY Here's the contract (*Hands it to MC CUE, who starts to look through it They crowd around this remarkable document*) I was just waiting to get it down in black and white before I walked in and told Walter I was through

MC CUE (*with contract*) Jesus, it is a hundred and fifty!

WILSON Was Walter sore?

HILDY The lousy snake-brain! The God-damn ungrateful ape! Called me a traitor, after ten years of sweating my pants off for practically nothing Traitor to what? What did he or anybody else in the newspaper business ever do for me except try to make a bum out of me! Says "You can't quit without notice!" What the hell does he think I am? A hired girl? Why, one more word and I'd have busted his whiskey snout for him!

KRUGER Why didn't you?

MURPHY Who's going to cover the hanging for the Examiner?

MC CUE Why the hell didn't you tell a fellow?

WILSON Yeah—instead of waiting till the last day?

HILDY And have Walter hear about it? I've always wanted to walk in and quit just like that! (*A snap of the fingers*) I been planning this for two months—packed up everything yesterday, and so did my girl! Furniture and all (*The fire signal has been sounding through the last few words HILDY looks up*) Hey, fellows, that's Kedzie and Madison: ain't it? The Washington Irving School's out there

MURPHY Who the hell's in school this time of night?

MC CUE What do you care, any how? You've quit

HILDY (*laughs, chagrined*) Just thought it might be a good fire, that's all (*Again the whirr and crash of the gallows*)

KRUGER For Christ's sake! (*At the window*) Ain't you got anything else to do? Hey! You Jacob!

BESSINGER Hey, fellows I'm trying to read

WILSON (*also near window*) They're changing the guards down there Look—they've got sixteen of them. (*Voices come from the courtyard—"Hey!" "Hurry up!" "Get a move on, Carl!" etc*)

MC CUE (*hands back the contract*) You're going to miss a swell hanging, Hildy

HILDY Yeah? You can stick it

MURPHY So you're going into the advertising business, eh? Writing poetry about Milady's drawers

ENDICOTT Going to wear an eye shade?

WILSON I'll bet he has a desk with his name on it, and a stenographer

MURPHY You'll be like a firehorse tied to a milk wagon

ENDICOTT (to MURPHY) I don't know what gets into these birds. Can you imagine punching a clock, and sitting around talking like a lot of stuffed shirts about statistics?

HILDY Yeah—sour grapes, that's all it is. Sour grapes

MURPHY I got a dumb brother went in for business. He's got seven kids and a mortgage, and belongs to a country club. He gets worse every year. Just a fat-head.

HILDY Listen to who's talking. Journalists! Peeking through keyholes! Running after fire engines like a lot of coach dogs! Waking people up in the middle of the night to ask them what they think of Mussolini. Stealing pictures off old ladies of their daughters that get raped in Oak Park. A lot of lousy, dirty butt-incks, swelling around with holes in their pants, borrowing nickels from office boys! And for what? So a million hired girls and motormen's wives'll know what's going on.

MURPHY Your girl must have handed you that line.

HILDY I don't need anybody to tell me about newspapers. I've been a newspaperman fifteen years. A cross

between a bootlegger and a whore. And if you want to know something, you'll all end up on the copy desk—gray-headed, humpbacked slobs, dodging garnishes when you're ninety.

SCHWARTZ Yeah, and what about you? How long do you think you'll last in that floosie job?

ENDICOTT You'll get canned cold the minute your contract's up, and then you'll be out in the street.

KRUGER Sure—that's what always happens.

HILDY Well, it don't happen to me. And I'll tell you why, if you want to know. Because my girl's uncle owns the business, that's why.

WILSON Has he got a lot of jack?

HILDY It's choking him. You know what he sent us for a wedding present?

MURPHY A dozen doilies.

HILDY I wouldn't tell you bums, because it's up in high finance and you wouldn't understand it.

ENDICOTT Probably gave you a lot of stock in the company, that you can't sell.

KRUGER I know them uncles.

HILDY The hell he did! He gave us five hundred in cash, that's what he gave us.

MC CUE Go on!

SCHWARTZ There *ain't* five hundred in cash.

HILLY Yeah? (*Pulling out a roll*)
Well, there it is—most of it, except
what it costs to get to New York

MC CUE Jeess let's see

HILLY Oh, no!

MURPHY How about a hint till to-
morrow?

HILLY (*mimicking an androgyne*)
I won't be here tomorrow And that
reminds me (*Takes out a little
book*) It comes to— (*Consults book*)
eight dollars and sixty five cents al-
together, Jummie Eight dollars and
sixty-five cents

MURPHY What does?

HILLY That includes the four bucks
in front of the Planter's Hotel, when
you were with that waitress from
King's

MURPHY I thought I paid that

HILLY No (*Reading from notes*)
Herman Schlosser altogether
twenty dollars and

MC CUE Ha! Ha! Ha!

ENDICOTT Ho! Ho! Ho!

HILLY All right I guess I might as
well call it off, all around I should
have known better than to try to col-
lect, anyhow (*Tears out the page
and throws it at MURPHY*) You
might say thanks

MURPHY Not after that waitress

SCHWARTZ About that fifty bucks,
Hildy If you want a note—

HILLY What fifty bucks? Aw, forget
it

SCHWARTZ You see, it wasn't only
the wife taking sick, but then
besides

(JENNIE, a slightly idiotic scrub-
woman, enters She receives an
oration "Yea Jennie!" "Jennie!"
"Well, if it ain't Jennie," all delivered
in various dialects with intended
comedy effect)

KRUGER I hear you just bought an-
other apartment house, Jennie!

MURPHY I hear you've fallen in love
again, Jennie!

JENNIE (*giggling*) Can I wash up
now, please?

BENSINGER Yeah, for God's sake do!
This place smells like a monkey
cage

HILLY Go on! You don't want to
wash up on a night like this! This is
a holiday! I'm going away, Jennie!
Give us a kiss! (*He embraces her*)

JENNIE (*squealing*) Now you Hildy
Johnson, you keep away from me!
I'll hit you with this mop! I will!

HILLY (*tickling her*) What's the
matter? Ain't I your fellow any more?
I'll tell you what we'll do, Jennie!
You and I'll go around and say good
bye! Everbody in the building!

MC CUE Hey, the warden called you
up! Wants to see you before you go!

HILLY There you are, Jennie! We're
invited! He invited Jennie, didn't
he? You bet he did!

JENNIE Now you know he didn't!

HILLY (*lifting pail of water*) Only
we can't carry this all over! I know!

(At window) Hey! Jacob! Look!
(Throws water out JENNIE giggles hysterically)

VOICE (off) Who did that?

SCHWARTZ Better shut off them lights Somebody's liable to come up

HILDY (to JENNIE) Come on, Jennie! We'll say good-bye to the warden! (He embraces her again)

JENNIE (struggling) No, no! You let go of me! The warden'll be mad! He'll do something!

HILDY To hell with him! I own this building! Come on! (Pausing in the door) If my girl calls up, tell her I'm on my way! (Exits with JENNIE, singing "Waltz Me Around Again, Jennie" Coy screams from JENNIE, and the banging of a pail as it is kicked down the corridor)

BENSINGER Thank God *that's* over!

KRUCER What's the Examiner going to do with Hildy off the job?

WILSON It must be great to walk into a place and quit

MC CUE Yeah (He moves sadly away and uses one of the phones on the long table) Diversey three two hundred

ENDICOTT (sentimentally) I got an offer from the publicity department of the stock yards last year I shoulda took it

SCHWARTZ What I'd like would be a job on the side

MC CUE (a lump in his throat) A desk and a stenographer That

wouldn't be so bad I wouldn't mind a nice big blonde

MURPHY (oulining a voluptuous bust) With a bozoom! (Phone on small table rings)

MC CUE (sighs, then into his own phone) Hello, Sarge McCue Anything doing?

WILSON (answering other phone) What's that? (His tone becomes slightly formal) Yes, ma'am

No, Hildy ain't here just now, madam He left a message for you, though Why, he said he was on his way No, he didn't say where—just that he was on his way

All right, I'll tell him, ma'am (Hangs up) Oooh! Is she sore?

SCHWARTZ Hildy oughtn't to do that She's a swell kid

MC CUE (into phone) All right! Thank you, Sarge! (Hangs up) A hundred and fifty bucks a week! Can you imagine?

KRUCER Probably gets Saturdays and Sundays off, too

WILSON (sadly) And Christmas

MC CUE I wonder who Walter'll send over here in Hildy's place. (MOLLIE MALLOY enters She is a North Clark Street tart, cheap black sateen dress, red hat and red slippers run over at the heels She is a soiled and gaudy houri of the pavement Despite a baleful glare on MOLLIE's part, the boys brighten visibly They are always glad to see whores)

MURPHY (warmly) Hello, Mollie!

ENDICOTT Well, well! Nookie!

WILSON Hello, kid! How's the old tomato-can?

MC CUE (*feeling himself to be a Chauncey Olcott*) Shure, and how are yez, Mollie?

MOLLIE (*in a tired, banjo voice*) I've been looking for you bastards!

MURPHY Going to pay a call on Williams?

SCHWARTZ He's just across the court-yard!

KRUGER Better hurry up—he hasn't got all night

MC CUE Yes, he has!

ENDICOTT (*formally*) Say, Mollie, those were pretty roses you sent Earl What do you want done with them tomorrow morning?

MOLLIE (*tensely*) A lot of wise guys, ain't you? Well, you know what I think of you—all of you

MURPHY Keep your pants on, Mollie

MOLLIE (*to MURPHY*) If you was worth breaking my fingernails on, I'd tear your puss wide open

MURPHY What you sore about, sweetheart? Wasn't that a swell story we give you?

MOLLIE You cheap crumbs have been making a fool out of me long enough!

ENDICOTT Now what kind of language is that?

BENSINGER She oughtn't to be allowed in here! I caught her using the drinking cup yesterday!

MOLLIE (*flaring*) I never said I loved Earl Williams and was willing to marry him on the gallows! You made that up! And all that other crap about my being his soul mate and having a love nest with him!

MC CUE Well, didn't you?

ENDICOTT You've been sucking around that cuckoo ever since he's been in the death house! Everybody knows you're his affinity!

MOLLIE (*blowing up*) That's a lie! I met Mr Williams just once in my life, when he was wandering around in the rain without his hat and coat on like a sick dog The day before the shooting And I went up to him like any human being would and I asked what was the matter, and he told me about bein' fired after working at the same place twenty-two years and I brought him up to my room because it was warm there

ENDICOTT Did he have the two dollars?

MURPHY Aw, put it on a Victrola

MOLLIE Just because you want to fill your lying papers with a lot of dirty scandal, you got to crucify him and make a bum out of me!

ENDICOTT Got a match, Mollie?

MOLLIE (*heedless*) I tell you he just sat there talking to me all night just sat there talkin' to me and never once laid a hand on me! In the morning he went away and I

never saw him again till the day at the trial!

ENDICOTT Tell us what you told the jury!

(They laugh *reminiscently*.)

MOLLIE Go on, laugh! God damn your greasy souls! Sure I was his witness—the only one he had. Yes, me! Mollie Malloy! A Clark Street tart! I was the only one with guts enough to stand up for him! And that's why you're persecuting me! Because he treated me decent, and not like an animal, and I said so!

ENDICOTT Why didn't you adopt him instead of letting him run around shooting policemen?

SCHWARTZ Suppose that cop had been your own brother?

MOLLIE I wish to God it had been one of you!

MURPHY (finally irritated) Say, what's the idea of this song and dance anyhow? This is the press room. We're busy.

SCHWARTZ Go on home!

MURPHY Go and see your boy friend, why don't you?

MC CUE Yeah—he's got a nice room.

ENDICOTT (with a wink at the rest) He won't have it long. He's left a call for seven A.M.

MOLLIE (through her teeth) It's a wonder a bolt of lightning don't come through the ceiling and strike you all dead! (Again the sound of the galls) What's that? Oh, my God! (She begins to cry.)

BENSINGER (rising) Say, what's the idea?

MOLLIE Talking that way about a fellow that's going to die.

ENDICOTT (uncomfortable at this show of grief) Don't get hysterical.

MOLLIE (sobbing) Shame on you! Shame on you!

MC CUE (to the rest) It wasn't my fault. I didn't say anything.

MOLLIE (hysterically) A poor little crazy fellow that never did any harm. Sitting there alone this minute, with the Angel of Death beside him, and you cracking jokes.

MURPHY (getting up meaningly) Listen, if you don't shut up, I'll give you something good to cry about!

MOLLIE (savage) Keep your dirty hands off me!

MURPHY (in a short and bitter struggle with her) Outside, bum!

MOLLIE (shouting through the door) You dirty punks! Heels! Bastards! (Exit.)

MURPHY (slams the door. A pause) The nervy bitch!

MC CUE Whew!

MURPHY You guys want to play some more poker?

ENDICOTT What's the use? I can't win a pot.

MURPHY I'm the big loser.

WILSON Me too. I must be out three dollars, anyhow.

ENDICOTT It's God-damn funny who's got it

ENDICOTT Hildy's quit, Sheriff Didn't you hear?

SCHWARTZ Don't look at me I started in with five bucks, and I got two-eighty left

MC CUE (*who has taken up the phone again*) Michigan eight thousand (SHERIFF HARTMAN enters briskly, *bitter words forming on his lips* He is a diabetic and overwrought little fellow, an incompetent fuss budget He has come to raise hell, but an oration checks him "Ah, Sheriff!" "Hello, Pinky!" "How's the old statesman?" BENSINGER puts down his book, MC CUE abandons his telephoning)

ENDICOTT Any news, Sheriff?

SHERIFF (*briefly*) Hello fellas (*In another tone*) Now, who dumped that bucket of water out the window?

KRUGER What bucket of water?

SHERIFF Who threw it out the window is what I asked, and I want to know!

MURPHY Judge Pam threw it out

SHERIFF I suppose Judge Pam threw that bottle!

ENDICOTT Yeah That was Judge Pam, too

MURPHY He was in here with his robes on, playing fireman

SHERIFF Come on now, fellas, I know who it was (*Wheeling*) It was Hildy Johnson, wasn't it? Where is he?

MC CUE Out with a lady

SHERIFF Well, I'm glad of it It's good riddance! Now personally, I don't give a God damn, but how do you suppose it looks to have a lot of hoodlums yelling and throwing things out of windows? (*In a subdued voice*) Besides there's somebody in that death house How do you suppose he feels, listening to all this re-vel-ery?

MURPHY A hell of a lot you care how he feels!

SCHWARTZ Keep your shirt on, Pinky

SHERIFF Wait a minute, you! I don't want to hear any more of that Pinky stuff I got a name, see? Peter B Hartman

MURPHY What's the matter with Pinky?

MC CUE (*taking the cue*) It's all right

THE REPORTERS (*lustily*) Who's all right?

SHERIFF (*desperate*) Now stop! (*Whining*) Honest, boys, what's the idea of hanging a name like that on me? Pinky Hartman! How's that look to the voters? Like I had sore eyes or something

MURPHY You never heard of Bath-house John kicking, did you?

WILSON Or Hinky Dink?

ENDICOTT It's made you famous!

SHERIFF I swear I don't know what to do about you fellows You abuse

every privilege you get I got a damn good notion to take this press room away from you

MURPHY That would be a break

INDICOTT Yeah The place is so full of cockroaches you can't walk

BENSINGER (*rising*) Wait a minute, fellows Now listen Pete, this is the last favor I'm ever going to ask you, and it ain't me that's asking it Get me? You know who's asking it—a certain party is asking it Once and for all, how about hanging this guy at five o'clock instead of seven? It ain't going to hurt you and we can make the City Edition

SHERIFF (*sincerely*) Aw, now, Roy, that's kind of raw You can't hang a fella in his sleep, just to please a newspaper

MURPHY No, but you can reprieve him twice so the hanging'll come three days before election! So you can run on a law-and-order ticket! You can do that all right!

SHERIFF I had nothing whatsoever to do with those reprieves That was entirely up to the Governor

ENDICOTT And who told the Governor what to do?

SCHWARTZ How do we know there won't be another reprieve tonight? For all I know I'm hanging around here for nothing! When I've got a sick wife!

WILSON Yeah, with another alienist getting called in!

MURPHY This Wop gooser!

SCHWARTZ Sure—what's all that about? Suppose he finds he's insane or something?

SHERIFF He *won't* find he's insane Because he isn't This ruse of reading the Declaration of Independence day and night is pure fake But I've got to let this doctor see him, on account of his being sent by these Personal Liberty people, or whatever they call themselves You and I know they're nothing but a bunch of Bolsheviks, but a hanging is a serious business At a time like this you want to please everybody

ENDICOTT Everybody that can vote, anyhow

SHERIFF Now he's going to look him over in my office in a couple of minutes, and then you'll know all about it Besides, there's nothing he *can* find out Williams is as sane as I am

SCHWARTZ Saner!

SHERIFF The hanging's going to come off exactly per schedule And when I say "per schedule" that means seven o'clock and not a minute earlier There's such a thing as being humane, you know

BENSINGER Just wait till you want a favor

SHERIFF (*to change the subject*) Now here are the tickets Two for each paper

MC CUE What do you mean, two for each paper?

SHERIFF (*stung*) What do you want to do—take your family?

SCHWARTZ Now listen, Pete I promised a pair to Ernie Byfield He's never seen a hanging

WILSON The boss wants a couple for the advertising department

SHERIFF (*passing out tickets*) This ain't the 'Follics," you know I'm tired of your editors using these tickets to get advertising accounts

ENDICOTT You got a lot of nerve! Everybody knows what you use 'em for—to get in socially

MURPHY He had the whole Union League Club over here last time

ENDICOTT Trying to suck in with Chatfield-Taylor I suppose you'll wear a monocle tomorrow morning

SHERIFF (*melting*) Now that ain't no way to talk, boys If any of you want a couple of extra tickets, why I'll be more than glad to take care of you Only don't kill it

SCHWARTZ Now you're talking!

WILSON That's more like it

SHERIFF Only you fellas got to lend a hand with us once in a while We got a big job on our hands, smashing this Red menace—

ENDICOTT We gave you four columns yesterday What do you want?

SHERIFF (*always the boy for a speech*) That ain't it The newspapers got to put their shoulders to the wheel They've got to forcibly impress on the Bolsheviks that the death-warrant for Earl Williams is a death-warrant for every bomb-throwing un-American Red in this town

This hanging means more to the people of Chicago today— (*To MURPHY, who is reading a comic supplement*) This is a statement, Jimmie What's the matter with you?

MURPHY Aw, go home

SHERIFF All right, you'll just get scooped Now we're going to reform these Reds with a rope That's our slogan Quote me if you want to 'Sheriff Hartman pledges that he is going to reform the Reds with a rope"

ENDICOTT Oh, for Christ's sake, Pinky! We've been printing that chestnut for weeks! (*He goes into the can*)

SHERIFF Well, print it once more, as a favor to me

WILSON You don't have to worry about the election You're as good as in now, with the nigger vote coming around

SHERIFF (*Lafayette, at least*) I was never prejudiced against the Negro race in any shape, manner, or form

MURPHY Are you still talking?

SHERIFF (*suddenly querulous*) During the race riots I just had to do my duty, that's all And of course I was misunderstood

KRUGER Go on! You're a Southern gentleman and you know it (*Phone rings*)

SHERIFF Now, boys!

MURPHY Shoah! (*In bogus Negro dialect*) Massa Hartman, of the Vah

ginia Hartmans (*Phone on small table rings MC CUE heads for it*)

ENDICOTT (*in the can, his voice rising above the plumbing*) I hear you used to own slaves

SCHWARTZ (*answering phone*) Press room! (*Into phone*) Who? Yeah, he's here For you, Sheriff

SHERIFF Me? (*Into phone—very businesslike*) Sheriff Hartman talking (*An eagle falling out of the clouds*) Oh, hello, dear

KRUGER Sounds like the bill and chain

SHERIFF Why, no, I didn't figure on coming home at all Well, you see on account of the hanging being so early—

MURPHY Tell her she's getting a break when you don't go home

SHERIFF (*annoyingly*) But you see this is business, dear You don't think a hanging's any fun for me!

ENDICOTT Music for this, Ernie!

SHERIFF (*agitatedly motions for silence*) But I have a whole lot to do first—getting things ready

MURPHY Why don't you take him out to your house and hang him?

SHERIFF (*fishhooks in his pants*) I'll call you up later, Irma—I'm not in my own office, now Besides, I've got to meet an alienist No—alienist No Not for me For Williams

(HILLY re-enters, bringing back JENNIE's mop)

HILLY (*throwing the mop across the room*) Boy, we cleaned up!

SHERIFF (*hurriedly*) I'll call you later, dear (*He hangs up, turns on HILLY*) Now Johnson, what the hell do you mean? Throwing things out of windows Who do you think you are?

(*During the quieter moments of the remainder of this act, HILLY is opening his parcels and putting the contents into his suitcase*)

HILLY Who wants to know?

SHERIFF You think you and Walter Burns are running this town? Well, I'm going to send a bill to the Examiner tomorrow for all the wreckage that's been committed around here in the past year! How do you like that?

HILLY I think that's swell! You know what else you can do?

SHERIFF (*belligerently*) What?

HILLY Guess

SHERIFF You stick your nose in this building tomorrow and I'll have you arrested!

HILLY It's damn near worth staying for!

SHERIFF And I'll tell you another thing and you can pass it on to Walter Burns! The Examiner don't get any tickets for this hanging after the lies they been printing! You can make up your story like you do everything else—out of whole cloth

HILLY Listen, you big pail of laid! If I wanted to go to your God-damn

hanging I'd go! See? And sit in a box!

SHERIFF The hell you would!

HILLY And I'd only have to tell half of what I know, at that!

SHERIFF You don't know anything

HILLY No? Tell me, Mr. Hartman, where'd you spend the night before that last hanging! At the Plinter's Hotel with that librarian Room Six Hundred and Two. And I got two bell boys and a night manager to prove it!

SHERIFF If I didn't have to go and see that alchemist I'd tell you a few things (Exits)

HILLY (calling after him) And if I were you I'd get two tickets for the hanging over to Walter Burns pretty fast or he's liable to come over here and stick a firecracker in your pants!

WILSON Hey! Hilly! Your girl called up

HILLY (stricken) My girl? When? (Starts for the telephone)

WILSON Just after you went out. And if you take my advice, you'll call her back

HILLY Jesus! Why didn't you tell a fellow!

(WOODENSHOFS re-enters with sandwiches and a bottle of ketchup)

MC CUE Yea! Sandwiches

HILLY (at phone) Edgewater two-one-six-four (To the rest) Was she mad at me?

MC CUE Did you bring the ketchup?
(They are crowding about WOODENSHOES)

BENSINGER How about my plain lettuce?

ENDICOTT A hamburger for me!

SCHWARTZ I ordered one, didn't I?

KRUGER You did not! This way, Woodenshoes!
(They are taking their sandwiches from WOODENSHOES — ENDICOTT tosses one at KRUGER)

HILLY (into phone) Hello, Peggy!
Hello (His voice becomes romantic)

MC CUE Attaboy! God, I'm starved

HILLY (into phone) Why, darling, what's the matter?

BENSINGER For God's sake, I said gluten bread

HILLY (into phone) But there isn't anything to cry about

MURPHY The service is getting terrible around here

HILLY (into phone) But listen darling! I had business to attend to. I'll tell you all about it the minute I see you. Aw, darling, I just dropped in here for one second. Because I had to. I couldn't go away without saying good bye to the fellows (To the others) Will you guys talk or something? (Back to phone) But listen! Sweetheart! Yes, I. Of course I handed in my resignation. Yes, I've got a taxi waiting. Right outside

WOODENSHOES (*uneasily*) Go easy on that ketchup I'm responsible for that

HILLY (*into phone*) I've got them right in my pocket, honey
Three on the eleven-eighteen I'm bringing 'em right out, mile a minute

WOODENSHOES She says you fellows have got to pay something soon

HILLY (*into phone*) Aw, darling, if you talk like that I'm going to go right out and jump in the lake I swear I will, because I can't stand it Listen! (*He looks around to see if it is safe to continue*)

KRUGER We're listening

HILLY (*trying to lower his voice With his mouth pressed to the mouth-piece, the following speeches are gagged into phone*) Darling I love you (*Appropriate music by KRUGER*) I said I love you (*Music again*)

SCHWARTZ Aw, give him a break, Eric
(KRUGER stops playing)

HILLY (*into phone*) That's more like it

WOODENSHOES Are you finished with this? (*Reaching for ketchup*)

MC CUE (*operating the bottle*) No

HILLY (*into phone*) Feel better now?
Well, smile And say something You know what I want to hear

SCHWARTZ (*a Cinderella*) Give me a half a one, somebody!

ENDICOTT Nothing doing

HILLY (*into the phone*) That's the stuff That's better Are you all packed? Oh, swell I'll be right there

WOODENSHOES You fellas ought to pay her a little something on account
(*Exits*)

WILSON (*answering Examiner phone*) What do you want?

HILLY Listen, darling, will you wear that little blue straw hat?

WILSON (*into phone*) Wait a minute—I'll see

HILLY (*into phone*) And are you all happy now? I bet you're not as happy as I am Oh, I'll bet you anything you want All right All right I'm on my way Not more than fifteen minutes Really this time Bye (*Hangs up*)

WILSON (*his hand over the mouth-piece*) Jesus Christ, Hildy—here's Walter again! Tell him to give us a rest, will you?

HILLY Oh, bollocks! (*Into phone*) You're just making a God damn nuisance of yourself! What's the idea of calling up all the time! No! I'm through with newspapers! I don't give a God damn what you think of me! I'm leaving for New York tonight! Right now! This minute! (*Hangs up Phone rings again He tears it from the wall and throws it out the window*)

KRUGER (*calmly*) Wrong number

MC CUE (*nervous*) For God's sake Hildy!

SCHWARTZ (*putting out the lights*)
You'll get us in a hell of a jam!

BENSINGER Haven't you got any sense?

HILDY (*yelling out the window*)
Tell Pinky to stick that among his souvenirs! (*To the rest*) If that lunatic calls up again tell him to put it in writing and mail it to Hildebrand Johnson, care of the Waterbury-Adams Corporation, Seven Thirty-five Fifth Avenue, New York City

MURPHY Put it on the wall, Mike

ENDICOTT (*going to the rear wall*)
Waterbury what?

MC CUE Adams

HILDY (*opening a parcel and showing a pale pair of gloves*) How do you like those onions? Marshall Field!

MC CUE Very individual

HILDY Where's my cane?

ENDICOTT What cane?

HILDY (*suddenly desperate*) Come now, fellas That ain't funny, who's got my cane?

MURPHY (*in a Central Office manner*) Can you describe this cane?

HILDY (*frantic*) Aw, for God's sake! Now listen, fellas--

KRUGER (*solicitous*) Are you sure you had it with you when you came into the room?

WILSON Was there any writing on it?

HILDY (*diving into BENSINGER's desk*) Come on! Cut the clowning! Where is it?

BENSINGER Keep out of my desk! Of all the God-damn kindergartens!

HILDY Jesus! I only got fifteen minutes Now, cut the kidding! My God, you fellows have got a sense of humor!

MURPHY Aw, give him his fairy wand!

ENDICOTT (*a Uranian for the moment, he produces cane from trouser leg*) Here it is, Gladys

HILDY God! You had me worried (*He picks up his suitcase Bravura*) Well, good-bye, you lousy wage slaves! When you're crawling up fire escapes, and getting kicked out of front doors, and eating Christmas dinner in a one-armed joint, don't forget your old pal, Hildy Johnson!

ENDICOTT Good-bye, Yonson

MC CUE So long, Hildy

MURPHY Send us a postcard, you big stewbum

KRUGER When'll we see you again, Hildy?

HILDY The next time you see me I'll be riding in a Rolls-Royce, giving out interviews on success-y

BENSINGER Good-bye, Hildy

WILSON Good-bye

SCHWARTZ Take care of yourself

HILDY So long, fellows! (*He strikes a Sidney Carton pose in the door*)

way, starts on a bit of verse) "And as the road beyond unfolds—" (He is interrupted by a terrific fusillade of shots from the courtyard. A roar of voices comes up from the jail yard. For a tense second everyone is motionless.)

VOICES (in the courtyard) Get the riot guns! Spread out, you guys! (Another volley.)

WILSON There's a jail break!

MURPHY (at window, simultaneously) Jacob! What's the matter? What's happened?

VOICES (in the jail yard) Watch the gate! He's probably trying the gate! (A huge siren begins to wail.)

SCHWARTZ (out the window) Who got away? Who was it?

VOICE (outside) Earl Williams!!!

THE REPORTERS Who? Who'd he say? Earl Williams! It was Earl Williams! He got away!

MC CUE Holy God! Gimme that telephone! (He works hook frantically) Hurry! I hurry up! Will you? This is important. (Others are springing for the telephones as searchlights sweep the windows from the direction of the jail.)

SCHWARTZ Jeez, this is gonna make a bum out of the Sheriff!

(HILLY stands paralyzed, his suitcase in his hand. There is a second rifle volley. Two window panes crash within the room. Some plaster falls. Gongs sound above the siren.)

MC CUE (screaming) Look out!

MURPHY (out of the window) Where you shooting, you God-damn fools? For Christ's sake! (Another pane goes.) Look out where you're aiming, will you?

SCHWARTZ There's some phones in the state's attorney's office!

KRUCER Yeah! (There is a general panic at the door. The reporters leave as if a bomb had broken in a trench. HILLY is left alone, still holding his suitcase. It falls. He moves back into the room, absently trailing a chair. Another shot.)

HILLY Ahh, Jesus Christ! (He lets go of the chair and takes one of the telephones.) Examiner? Gimme Walter Burns! Quick! (Very calmly he sits on one of the long tables, his back against the wall. Then, quietly) Hello, Walter! Hilly Johnson! For get that! Earl Williams just lammed out of the County Jail! Yep yep yep don't worry! I'm on the job! (There is a third volley. HILLY sails his hat and coat into a corner and is removing his overcoat as the curtain falls.)

ACT TWO

The Scene is the same as Act I—It is twenty minutes later Searchlights play outside the windows JENNIE, the scrubwoman, is on stage, sweeping up broken glass and doing a little miscellaneous cleaning WOODENSHOES enters

WOODENSHOES Where are all the reporters? Out looking for him?

JENNIE They broke all the windows and pulled off a telephone Any, those newspaper fellows! They're worse'n anything

WOODENSHOES There wasn't any excuse for his escaping This sort of thing couldn't ever happen, if they listened to me

JENNIE Oooh, they'll catch him Those big lights

WOODENSHOES What good will that do Society? The time to catch 'em is while they're little kids That's the whole basis of my crime prevention theory It's all going to be written up in the papers soon

JENNIE Oooh, what they print in the papers! I never seen anything like it *(She is sweeping ENDICOTT enters and makes for a phone WOODENSHOES watches him)*

WOODENSHOES Has anything happened, Mr Endicott?

ENDICOTT *(into phone)* Endicott calling Gimme a rewrite man

WOODENSHOES You know, this would be just the right time for you

to print my theory of crime prevention, that you said you were going to *(Pulling out a sheaf of documents)*

ENDICOTT *(into phone, waving him off as if he were a horsefly)* Well, hurry it up

WOODENSHOES Now here I got the city split up in districts I got them marked in red

ENDICOTT What? For God's sake, can't you see I'm— *(Into phone)* Hello! Gill?

WOODENSHOES But you been promising me you'd—

ENDICOTT *(snatches papers)* All right—I'll take it home and study it Now for God's sake stop annoying me—I got to work! I can't sit around listening to you! Get out of here and stop bothering me! *(Back to phone)* Ready, Gill? Now, here's the situation so far

WOODENSHOES *(to JENNIE)* He's going to take it home and study it You'll see it in the paper before long *(Exits)*

ENDICOTT *(into phone)* Right! At ten minutes after nine Williams was taken to the Sheriff's private office to be examined by this Professor

Eglehofer, and a few minutes later he shot his way out. No—nobody knows where he got the gun. Or if they do they won't tell. Yeah.

Yeah. He run up eight flights of stairs to the infirmary, and got out through the skylight. He must have slid down the rampipe to the street. Yeah. No, I tell you nobody knows where he got it. I got hold of Jacob, but he won't talk. (MURPHY enters.)

MURPHY (crossing to phone) Outside, Jennie! Outside!

ENDICOTT They're throwing a drag-net around the whole North Side. Watching the railroads and Red headquarters. The Chief of Police has ordered out every copper on the force and says they'll get Williams before morning.

MURPHY (into phone) Hello, sweetheart. Give me the desk, will you?

ENDICOTT (into phone, after a final look at his notes) The Crime Commission has offered a reward of ten thousand dollars for his capture. Yeah. I'm going to try to get hold of Eglehofer. He knows what's happened, if I can find him. Call you back. (Hangs up and exits swiftly.)

MURPHY For Chris' sake, Jennie! Every time we turn our backs you start that God-damn sweeping.

JENNIE (picking up her traps) All right. Only it's dirty. I get scolded.

MURPHY (into phone) Murphy talking. No clue yet as to Earl Williams' whereabouts. Here's a little feature, though. A tear bomb tear bomb criminals cry for it.

(SHERIFF HARTMAN appears in the doorway. He has been running around, shouting a million orders, nervous, bewitched and sweating like a June bride. He is in his shirt sleeves, and his diamond-studded badge of office is visible.)

MURPHY (into phone) Yeh! Tear bomb.

SHERIFF (as he enters, speaking to someone in the corridor) To hell with the Mayor! If he wants me he knows where I am.

MURPHY (into phone) A tear bomb went off unexpectedly in the hands of Sheriff Hartman's bombing squad.

SHERIFF (stunned) What went off?

MURPHY (into phone) The following deputy sheriffs were rushed to Passavant Hospital.

SHERIFF A fine fair-weather friend you are!

MURPHY (remorselessly, into phone) Philip Lustgarten.

SHERIFF After all I've done for you!

MURPHY (phoning) Herman Waldstein.

SHERIFF Putting stuff like that in the papers!

MURPHY (phoning) Sidney Matzburg.

SHERIFF That's gratitude for you! (He exits.)

MURPHY (phoning) Henry Koo.

JENNIE (*going toward door*) Ain't that terrible?

(KRUGER enters and goes to a phone)

MURPHY (*phoning*) Abe Lefkowitz

JENNIE All those fellows! (*Exits*)

KRUGER (*at his phone*) Give me re-wire

MURPHY (*phoning*) And William Gilhooly Call you back (*Hangs up and exits*)

KRUGER (*into phone*) Ready?
A man corresponding to Earl Williams' description was seen boarding a southbound Cottage Grove Avenue car at Austen Avenue by Motorman Julius L. Roosevelt (MC CUE enters) Yeah—Roosevelt I thought it would make a good feature on account of the name

MC CUE (*phoning*) McCue talking
Give me the desk

KRUGER (*phoning*) All right, I'll go right after it Call you back (*Exits*)

MC CUE (*into phone*) Hello Is that you, Emil? Are you ready? Side-lights on the man hunt Mrs Irma Schlogel, fifty-five, scrublady, was shot in the left leg while at work scrubbing the eighth floor of the Wrigley Building by one of Sheriff Hartman's special deputies (*There is a fusillade of shots in the distance*
HILDY JOHNSON enters)

HILDY There goes another scrublady (*Goes to phone, but starts arranging notes*)

MC CUE (*phoning*) No, just a flesh wound They took her to Passavant

Hospital (*Hangs up* To HILDY)
Any dope on how he got out?

HILDY From all I can get they were playing leap frog

MC CUE How about Jacobi? Did he say anything to you?

HILDY Not a word (MC CUE goes)

HILDY (*quickly picks up his receiver*)
Gimme Walter Burns (*He gets up and closes the door carefully, comes back to his phone*) Walter? Say, listen I got the whole story from Jacobi and I got it exclusive That's right, and it's a pip Only listen It cost me two hundred and sixty bucks, see? Just a minute—I'll give you the story I'm telling you first I had to give him all the money I had on me and it wasn't exactly mine Two hundred and sixty bucks, and I want it back (*Yells*) Well, did you hear what I said about the money? All right, then here's your story It's the jail break of your dreams Dr Mrs J Eglehofer, a profound thinker from Vienna was giving Williams a final sanity test in the Sheriff's office—you know, sticking a lot of pins in him to get his reflexes. Then he decided to re-enact the crime exactly as it had taken place, so as to study Williams' powers of co-ordination Well, I'm coming to it, God damn it Will you shut up? Of course he had to have a gun to re-enact with And who do you suppose supplied it? Peter B Hartman "B" for brains I tell you, I'm not kidding Hartman gave his gun to the Professor, the Professor gave it to Earl, and Earl shot the Professor right in the belly Ain't it perfect? If the Sheriff had unrolled a red carpet like at a Polish wedding and loaned Williams an um-

brella, it couldn't have been more ideal. Egglehofer? No, not bad. They spirited him away to Passavant Hospital. No, we got it exclusive. Now listen, Walter. It cost me two hundred and sixty bucks for this story, and I want it back. I had to give it to Jacobi before he'd cough up his guts. Two hundred and sixty dollars—the money I'm going to get married on. Never mind about fine work—I want the money. No, I tell you, I'm not going to cover anything else—I'm going away. (PEGGY appears in the doorway. She is a pretty girl of twenty. HILDA has his back to the door.) Listen, you lousy stiff. I just did this as a personal favor. Now I'm leaving town, and I gave Jacobi every cent I got, and I want it back right away! When will you send it over? Well, see that you do or I can't get married! All right, and tell him to run. I'll be waiting right here in the press—(He hangs up and sees PEGGY. With a guilty start.) Hello, Peggy.

PEGGY What was that, over the telephone?

HILDA Nothing. I was just telling Walter Burns I was all through, that's all. Hello, darling.

(PEGGY, despite her youth and simplicity, seems overwhelmingly mature in comparison to HILDA. As a matter of fact, PEGGY belongs to that division of womanhood which dedicates itself to suppressing in its lovers or husbands the spirit of D'Artagnan, Roland, Captain Kidd, Cyrano, Don Quixote, King Arthur or any other type of the male innocent and rampant. In her unconscious and highly noble efforts to make what the female world calls "a man" out of HILDA, PEGGY has neither the sympathy nor acclaim of the authors, yet

—regarded superficially, she is a very sweet and satisfying heroine.)

PEGGY You haven't done something foolish with that money? Our money!

HILDA No. No!

PEGGY You still *have* got the rest of it?

HILDA Of course. Gee, darling, you don't think for a minute—

PEGGY I think I'd better take care of it from now on!

HILDA Now listen, honey, I can look after a couple of hundred dollars all right.

PEGGY Hilda, if you've still got that money I want you to give it to me.

HILDA Now, sweetheart, it's going to be perfectly all right.

PEGGY (she divines, alas, her lover's failing.) Then you haven't got it.

HILDA Not—this minute, but I—

PEGGY You *did* do something with it!

HILDA No, no. He's sending it right over—Walter, I mean. It'll be here any minute.

PEGGY (her vocabulary is reduced to a coal of fire.) Oh, Hilda!

HILDA (a preposterous fellow.) Listen, darling, I wouldn't have had this happen for the world. But it's going to be all right. Now here's what happened. I was just starting out to the house to get you when this guy Williams broke out of jail.

You know, the fellow they were going to hang in the morning

PEGGY (*intolerant of the antics of the Cyrano sex*) Yes, I know

HILLY Ah now, listen, sweetheart, I *had* to do what I did And—and the same thing when it came to the money— (*She turns away*) Peggy! Now listen I shouldn't tell you this, but I haven't got any secrets from you Do you know how this guy escaped? He was down in the Sheriff's office when Hartman—that's the Sheriff—and Eglehofer—that's this fellow from Vienna—

PEGGY Hilly!

HILLY Aw, now I can't tell you if you won't listen I *had* to give him the money so he wouldn't give the story to anybody else Jacobi, I mean That's the assistant warden I got the story exclusive—the biggest scoop in years, I'll bet

PEGGY Do you know how long mother and I waited, out at that house?

HILLY Aw, Peggy, listen You ain't going to be mad at me for this I couldn't help it You'd have done the same thing yourself I mean, the biggest story in the world busting, and nobody on the job

PEGGY I might have known it would happen again

HILLY Aw, listen—

PEGGY Every time I've ever wanted you for something—on my birthday, and New Year's Eve, when I waited all five in the morning—

HILLY But a big story broke, don't you remember

PEGGY It's always a big story—the biggest story in the world and the next day everybody's forgotten it, even you!

HILLY What do you mean forgotten? That was the Clara Hamon murder—on your birthday Now for God's sake, Peggy, it won't hurt to wait five more minutes The boy's on his way with the money now

PEGGY Mother's sitting downstairs waiting in a taxicab I'm just ashamed to face her, the way you've been acting If she knew about that money—it's all we've got in the world, Hilly We haven't even got a place to sleep in, except the train, and—

HILLY Aw, gee, I wouldn't do anything in the world to hurt you Peggy You make me feel like a criminal

PEGGY It's all that Walter Burns Oh, I'll be so glad when I get you away from him—You simply can't resist him

HILLY For God's sake Peggy, I've told you what I think of him I wouldn't raise a finger if he was dying Honest to God

PEGGY Then why did you loan him the money?

HILLY I didn't! You see, you won't listen to me, or you'd know I didn't Now, listen I had to give the money to Jacobi the assistant—

(WOODENSHOES ushers in MRS CRANT MRS CRANT is a confused little widow who has tried her best to adjust her mind to HILLY as a son-in-law)

WOODENSHOES Here they are, ma'am (*Exits immediately*)

HILDA Oh, hello, Mrs. Grant—mother I was just explaining to Peggy—

PEGGY Mother, I thought you were going to wait in the cab

MRS. GRANT (*a querulous yet practical soul*) Well, I just came up to tell you the meter's gone to two dollars

HILDA Yeah, sure But that's all right

MRS. GRANT (*with the wandering egoism of age*) I had a terrible time finding you First I went into a room where a lot of policemen were playing cards

HILDA Yeah—that was—now, I'll tell you what we'll do

MRS. GRANT Then I met that policeman and I asked him where Mr. Johnson's office was, and he brought me here

PEGGY Now listen, mother, I think you'd better go downstairs and we'll come as soon as we can

MRS. GRANT (*inspecting*) You've got a big room, haven't you? Where do you sit?

HILDA Now, I tell you what you do You and Peggy go on over to the station and get the baggage checked now here's the tickets

PEGGY Now, Hilda

HILDA I'll be along in fifteen minutes—maybe sooner

MRS. GRANT How do you mean—that you aren't going?

HILDA Of course I am Now, I'll meet you at the Information Booth—

PEGGY Come, mother Hilda has to wait here a few minutes It's something to do with the office—he's getting some money

MRS. GRANT (*on familiar ground*) Money?

HILDA Yeah—they're sending over—it's my salary They're sending over my salary

MRS. GRANT (*the voice of woman-kind*) Your salary? At this hour?

HILDA They were awful busy, and I couldn't disturb them very well

MRS. GRANT The trouble is you're too easy with people—letting them wait till this hour before paying you your salary I how do you know they'll give it to you at all?

PEGGY Mother, we'll go on over Hilda'll be along

MRS. GRANT Do you know what I'm beginning to think?

HILDA (*apprehensive*) What?

MRS. GRANT I think you must be a sort of irresponsible type or you wouldn't do things this way It's just occurred to me you didn't do one blessed thing to help our getting away

PEGGY Now you stop picking on my Hilda, mother

MRS. GRANT Why I had to sublet the apartment, and pack all the wed-

ding presents— (MC CUE enters Goes to phone, with side glances at the others) Why, that's work a man ought to do You weren't even there to put things in the taxi—I had to give the man fifty cents And now here you are standing here with the train leaving any minute—

HILDY Now, mother, I never missed a train in my life You run along with Peggy—

MC CUE (into phone) Hello McCue talking

PEGGY Come on, mother We're disturbing people

HILDY This is my girl, Mac, and her mother Mr McCue

MC CUE (tipping his hat) Pleased to meet you (Into phone) Here's a hell of a swell feature on the man hunt (To the ladies) Excuse my French! (Into phone) Mrs Phoebe De Wolfe eight-sixty-one and a half South State Street, colored, gave birth to a pickaninny in a patrol wagon, with Sheriff Hartman's special Rifle Squad acting as midwives

MRS GRANT Mercy!

MC CUE (pleased at having interested her) You oughta have seen 'em, ma'am

PEGGY Come on, mother

HILDY Listen, mother, you better run along I'll put my suitcase in the cab

MC CUE (phoning) Well, Phoebe was walking along the street when all of a sudden she began having

labor pains No! Labor pains! Didn't you ever have labor pains? Righto! She was hollering for her husband, who's been missing for five months, when the police seen her And Deputy Henry Shreson, who's a married man, saw what her condition was So he coraxed her into the patrol wagon and they started a race with the stork for Passavant Hospital

HILDY (to MC CUE, as he goes out) If a boy comes here for me hold him, I'll be right back! (They are gone)

MC CUE (into phone) Listen—when the pickaninny was born the Rifle Squad examined him carefully to see if it was Earl Williams, who they knew was hiding somewhere (Laughs at his own joke) They named him Peter Hartman De Wolfe in honor of the Sheriff, and they all chipped in a dollar apiece on account of it being the first baby ever born in a man hunt (The Mayor enters) Wait a minute—here's the Mayor himself Maybe there's a statement (Under ordinary circumstances the MAYOR is a bland, unruffled soul, full of ease and confidence a bit stupid, walking as if he were on snowshoes and carrying an unlighted cigar with which he gestures as if it were a wand The events of the last hour have unhinged him He is eager for news—even the worst)

MAYOR Don't pester me now, please I got a lot on my mind

MC CUE (into phone) The Mayor won't say anything (He hangs up)

MAYOR Have you seen Sheriff Hartman?

MC CUE Been in and out all night your Honor

(MURPHY and ENDICOTT enter)

MURPHY Now listen, your Honor
We've got to have a statement

ENDICOTT We go to press in twenty
minutes

MAYOR I can't help that, boys I
have nothing to say—not at this time

MURPHY What do you mean—"not
at this time?" Who do you think you
are, Abraham Lincoln?

ENDICOTT Come on, cut the states-
man stuff! What do you know about
the escape? How'd he get out?

MURPHY Where'd he get the gun?

MAYOR Wait a minute, boys
Not so fast!

ENDICOTT Well, give us a statement
on the election, then

MURPHY What effect's all this go-
ing to have on the colored voters?

MAYOR Not in 1931. In what way
can an unavoidable misfortune of
this sort influence the duty of every
citizen, colored or otherwise?

MURPHY B'long

ENDICOTT Listen here, Mayor Is
there a Red Menace or isn't there?
and how did he get out of that rub-
ber jail of yours?

MC CUE Are you going to stand the
gaff, Mayor? Or have you picked out
somebody that's responsible?

MURPHY (innocently) Any truth in
the report that you're on Trotsky's
payroll?

ENDICOTT Yeah—the Senator claims
you sleep in red underwear

MAYOR Never mind the jokes Don't
forget that I'm Mayor of this town
and that the dignity of my office
(HARTMAN enters—the MAYOR turns
abruptly on him) Hartman! I've
been looking for you

ENDICOTT (leaping at the SHERIFF)
What's the dope, Pinky? How did
he get out?

MC CUE What was he doing in your
office?

MURPHY What's this about some-
body gettin' shot?

ENDICOTT Where did he get the
gun?

SHERIFF (jotting notes on a piece of
paper with the hope that he will
seem busy) Just a minute, fellas

MURPHY For God's sake, cut the
stallin'! Who engineered the get
away?

ENDICOTT Was it the Reds?

SHERIFF Just a minute, I tell you.
We've got him located!

MURPHY Who? Williams!

ENDICOTT Where?

MC CUE Where is he?

SHERIFF Out to the place where he
used to live on Clark Street
Just got the tip

ENDICOTT Holy God!

MC CUE Why didn't you say so?

SHERIFF The Rifle Squad is just going out

ENDICOTT Where are they?

SHERIFF Downstairs All the boys are with them

MURPHY For the love of God! (**MURPHY, ENDICOTT and MC CUE** rush out)

ENDICOTT (in the hall) Hey, there, Charlie!

SHERIFF (calling into the corridor) Report to me Charlie, the minute you get there! I'll be in the building!

MAYOR Pete, I want to talk to you!

SHERIFF I ain't got time, Fred—hon—est I'll see you after

MAYOR Pete, there's one thing I've got to know Did you yourself actually give Williams that gun?

SHERIFF (wailing) The Professor asked me for it I didn't know what he wanted it for I thought it was something scientific

MAYOR Now listen, Fred— (**KRUGER enters, whistling Both statesmen become silent and self-conscious**)

KRUGER (heading for phone) Hello, your Honor Any statement on the Red uprising tomorrow?

MAYOR What Red uprising?

SHERIFF There'll be no Red uprising!

KRUGER The Senator claims the situation calls for the militia

MAYOR You can quote me as saying that anything the Senator says is a tissue of lies

KRUGER (at phone) Kruger calling

SHERIFF Why aren't you with the Rifle Squad? They've just gone out

KRUGER We've got a man with them (*Into phone*) Here's a red-hot statement from the Senator Ready? He says the City Hall is another Augean Stables Augein! Oh, for God's sake! (*Turns*) He don't know what Augean means

MAYOR The Senator don't know either

KRUGER Well, take the rest, anyhow (*Into phone*) The Senator claims that the Mayor and the Sheriff have shown themselves to be a couple of eight-year-olds playing with fire Then this is quote "It is a lucky thing for the city that next Tuesday is Election Day, as the citizens will thus be saved the expense of impeaching the Mayor and the Sheriff" That's all—call you back (*Hangs up*) How are you, Mayor? (*Exits, whistling*)

MAYOR (closing the door) I've got a mighty unpleasant task to perform, Pete—

SHERIFF (beside himself) Now listen, Fred, you're just gonna get me rattled

MAYOR (inexorably) Two years ago we almost lost the colored vote on account of that coon story you told at the Dixie Marching Club Mandy and the traveling sales man

SHERIFF Why harp on that now?

MAYOR Now you come along with another one of your moron blunders
The worst of your whole career

SHERIFF (*frantic*) Listen, Fred Stop worrying, will you? Just do me a favor and stop worrying! I'm doing everything on God's green earth! I've just sworn in four hundred deputies!

MAYOR Four hundred! Do you want to bankrupt this administration?

SHERIFF (*pleadingly*) I'm getting them for twelve dollars a night

MAYOR Twelve dollars—! For those God damn uncles of yours? What do you think this is—Christmas Eve?

SHERIFF (*with dignity*) If you're talking about my brother-in-law, he's worked for the city fifteen years

MAYOR (*bitterly*) I know Getting up fake tag days! Pete, you're through!

SHERIFF (*stunned*) What do you mean—through?

MAYOR I mean I'm scratching your name off the ticket Tuesday and running Czernecki in your place. It's nothing personal. And Pete—it's the only way out. It's a sacrifice we all ought to be glad to make

SHERIFF (*David to Jonathan*) Fred!

MAYOR Now, Pete! Please don't appeal to my sentimental side

SHERIFF I don't know what to say. A thing like this almost destroys a man's faith in human nature

MAYOR I wish you wouldn't talk like that, Pete

SHERIFF Our families, Fred. My God, I've always looked on Bessie as my own sister

MAYOR (*wavering and desperate*). If there was any way out

SHERIFF (*as a phone rings*) There is a way out. I've got this Williams surrounded, haven't I? What more do you want? Now if you just give me a couple of hours— (*Into phone*) Hello. Yes. Hello! (*Wildly*) Four hundred suppers! Nothing doing! This is a man hunt—not a banquet! The twelve dollars includes everything! Well, the hell with them! Earl Williams ain't eating, is he? (*He hangs up*) That gives you an idea of what I'm up against!

MAYOR (*hotly*) We're up against a lot more than that with that nutty slogan you invented "Reform the Reds with a rope" (*SHERIFF winces*) There ain't any God damn Reds and you know it!

SHERIFF Yeah, but why go into that now, Fred?

MAYOR The slogan I had was all we needed to win—"Keep King George Out of Chicago!"

SHERIFF My God, I ain't had a bite to eat since this thing happened

MAYOR Pete, two hundred thousand colored votes are at stake! And we've got to hang Earl Williams to get them

SHERIFF But we're going to hang him, Fred. He can't get away. (*A knock on the door*)

MAYOR What do you mean he can't get away! He got away, didn't he? Now look here, Pete— (*Knocking louder*) Who's out there?

A VOICE (*outside*) Is Sheriff Hartman in there?

SHERIFF (*starts for door, relieved*) Ah! It's for me! (*Opens the door. A small man named PINCUS stands there*) I'm Sheriff Hartman. Do you want me?

PINCUS (*a very colorless and unimpressive person*) Yes, sir I've been looking all over for you, Sheriff. You're certainly a hard fellow to find.

MAYOR (*annoyed*) What do you want?

PINCUS (*taking a document from his pocket and proffering it to the Sheriff*) He smiles in a comradely fashion. From the Governor.

MAYOR What's from the Governor?

SHERIFF Huh?

PINCUS The reprieve for Earl Williams.

SHERIFF (*stunned*) For who?

PINCUS (*amiably*) Earl Williams. The reprieve. (*A ghastly pause*) I thought I'd never find you. First I had a helluva time getting a taxi—

MAYOR Wait—a minute. (*Getting his bearings*) Is this a joke or something?

PINCUS Huh?

SHERIFF (*bursting out*) It's a mistake—there must be a mistake! The

Governor gave me his word of honor or he wouldn't interfere! Two days ago!

MAYOR And you fell for it! Holy God, Pete! It frightens me what I'd like to do to you! Wait a minute! Come here, you! Who else knows about this?

PINCUS They were all standing around when he wrote it. It was after they got back from fishing.

MAYOR Get the Governor on the phone, Hartman.

PINCUS They ain't got a phone. They're duck-shooting now.

MAYOR A lot of God-damn numrods.

SHERIFF (*who has been reading the reprieve*) Can you beat that? Read it! (*Thrusts the paper into Mayor's hands*) Insane, he says! (*Striding over to the messenger*) He knows God damn well that Earl Williams ain't insane!

PINCUS Yeah! But I—

SHERIFF This reprieve is pure politics and you know it! It's an attempt to ruin us!

MAYOR (*reading*) Dementia praecox! My God!

SHERIFF We got to think fast before those lying reporters get hold of this. What'll we tell 'em?

MAYOR What'll you tell 'em? I'll tell you what you can tell 'em! You can tell 'em your damn relatives were out there shooting everybody they see, for the hell of it!

SHERIFF Now Fred, you're just excited (*Phone rings, SHERIFF starts for the phone, talking as he goes*) We aren't going to get any place, nowing like this

MAYOR And you can tell 'em the Republican Party is through in this state on account of you

SHERIFF (*into phone*) Hello! This is Hartman

MAYOR (*apoplectic*) And you can add as an afterthought that I want your resignation now

SHERIFF (*from the phone*) Sssh. What, Fred (*Excitedly into phone*) What? Where? Where? My God!

MAYOR What is it?

SHERIFF They got him! (*Back to phone*) Wait a minute—hold the wire (*To the MAYOR*) They got Earl Williams surrounded the Rifle Squad has in his house

MAYOR Tell 'em to hold the wire

SHERIFF I did (*Into phone*) Hold the wire

MAYOR Cover up that transmitter! (*SHERIFF does so MAYOR faces PINCUS*) Now listen! You never arrived here with this—whatever it is Get that?

PINCUS (*blinking*) Yes, I did

MAYOR How much do you make a week?

PINCUS Huh?

MAYOR (*impatiently*) How much do you make a week? What's your salary?

PINCUS (*reluctantly*) Forty dollars

SHERIFF (*into phone*) No—don't cut me off

MAYOR How would you like to have a job for three hundred and fifty dollars a month? That's almost a hundred dollars a week!

PINCUS Who? Me?

MAYOR Who the hell do you think? (*PINCUS is a little staided the MAYOR hastens to adopt a milder manner*) Now listen There's a fine opening for a fellow like you in the City Sealers office

PINCUS The what?

MAYOR The City Sealers' office!

PINCUS You mean here in Chicago?

MAYOR (*frowning*) Yes, yes

SHERIFF (*at phone*) Well, wait a minute will you? I'm in conference

PINCUS (*a very deliberate intellect*) No, I couldn't do that

MAYOR Why not?

PINCUS I couldn't work in Chicago. You see, I've got my family in Springfield

MAYOR (*desperate*) But you could bring 'em to Chicago! We'll pay all your expenses

PINCUS (*with vast thought*) No, I don't think so

MAYOR For God's sake, why not?

PINCUS Yeah?

PINCUS I got two kids going to high school there, and if I changed them from one town to another they'd probably lose a grade.

MAYOR But only twice a year.

PINCUS This puts me in a hell of a hole.

MAYOR No, they wouldn't—they'd gain one! They could go into any class they want to. And I guarantee that they'll graduate with highest honors!

MAYOR No it doesn't. (*Hands him the reprieve*) Now remember You never delivered this, whatever it is. You got caught in the traffic or something. Now get out of here and don't let anybody see you.

PINCUS (*hurd*) Yeah?

PINCUS But how do I know?

MAYOR And the Chicago school system is the best in the world. (*To SHERIFF*) Isn't it?

MAYOR Come in and see me in my office tomorrow. What's your name?

SHERIFF Far and away! (*Into phone*) Hold your horses—will you, Mittelbaum. Hurry up, Fred!

PINCUS Pincus.

MAYOR Now what do you say?

MAYOR All right Mr Pincus, all you've got to do is lay low and keep your mouth shut. Here! (*He hands him a card*) Go to this address. It's a nice homey little place, and you can get anything you want. (*He sees PINCUS through the door*) Just tell 'em Fred sent you. (*PINCUS goes*)

PINCUS What did you say this job was?

MAYOR In the City Sealer's office!

PINCUS What's he do?

SHERIFF (*into phone, desperately*) Will you wait, for God's sake? I'll tell you in a minute! (*He turns to the MAYOR with a gesture of appeal*)

MAYOR (*jumping*) Oh, for God's sake!

MAYOR (*hushily*) All right. Tell 'em to shoot to kill.

SHERIFF He has charge of all the important documents. He puts the City seals on them.

SHERIFF What?

MAYOR That's about on a par with the rest of your knowledge! The City Sealer's duty, my friend, is to see that the people of Chicago are not milked by unscrupulous butchers and grocers.

MAYOR Shoot to kill, I said.

SHERIFF That's what I meant.

SHERIFF I don't know, Fred. There's that reprieve if they ever find out.

MAYOR It's his duty to go around and test their scales.

MAYOR Nobody reproved that policeman he murdered. Now do as I tell you.

SHERIFF (*into phone*) Hello, Mittelbaum Listen (*His voice is weak*) Shoot to kill That's the orders—pass the word along No! We don't want him! And listen, Mittelbaum—five hundred bucks for the guy that does the job

Yes, I'll be right out there (*Hangs up*) Well, I hope that's the right thing to do (*There is a great kicking on the door*)

HILDA (*outside*) Hey! Who's in there? Open that door!

MAYOR (*en route to the door*) For God's sake take that guilty look off your face And stop trembling like a horse (*The SHERIFF starts whistling, "Ach, du Lieber Augustine" in what he imagines is a care-free manner The MAYOR opens the door, HILDA enters*)

HILDA Oh, it's you two! Well what's the idea of locking the door? Playing post-office? (*Going to phone*)

SHERIFF (*with elaborate unconcern, as he walks toward the door*) Oh, hello, Hilda,

MAYOR Come on, Hartman

HILDA (*into the phone*) Gimme Walter Burns (*To the others*) Was there a fellow in here asking for me?

SHERIFF Did you hear we've got Williams surrounded?

HILDA Yeah I heard you only let him out so he could vote for you on Tuesday

MAYOR Hartman! (*He pulls SHERIFF out of the room*)

HILDA (*into phone*) Hello, Duffy this is Hilda Listen, where's

Walter? Well, where did he go? God damn it, Duffy, I'm waitin' here for the boy to bring over my money the two hundred and sixty dollars he owes me Yeah in the press room He told me the boy was on his way What the hell are you laughin' about? Listen, Duffy, has that maniac started the money over or not? No, I ain't got time to come over to the office I'll miss the train Oh, for God's sake! that double-crossing louse! (*He hangs up*)

(WOODENSHOES enters)

WOODENSHOES The trouble is, nobody's using the right psychology Now you take this aspect of the situation you got a man named Earl Williams who has escaped

HILDA (*seizing at a straw*) I have you got two hundred and sixty dollars on you?

WOODENSHOES What?

HILDA Have you got two hundred and sixty dollars?

WOODENSHOES No, but I got a way of making it, and more I know how we can get ten thousand dollars, if you'll just listen (*Pointing his finger at HILDA in the manner of a man letting the cat out of the bag*) Ser-chay la femme!

HILDA What?

WOODENSHOES (*inexorably—for him*) Who is it that's been defendin' this feller Williams right along? Who is it that was hangin' around his room just before the escape happened?

HILDA O, for God's sake! I ain't got time Woodenshoes I got to get to

hundred and sixty dollars in the next five minutes!

WOODENSHOES It's gonna take longer than five minutes I know where Earl Williams is!

HILLY He's out at Clark and Fullerton, getting his head blown off But that don't get me any money

WOODENSHOES Earl Williams is with that girl, Mollie Malloy! That's where he is!

HILLY (*despairing*) Can you imagine—this time tomorrow I'd have been a gentleman (*DIAMOND LOUIE enters HILLY leaps for him*) Thank God! Have you got the dough?

LOUIE Hub?

WOODENSHOES She sent him a lot of roses, didn't she?

HILLY God damn it—the hell with your roses Gimme the dough I'm in a hell of a hurry, Louie

LOUIE What are you talkin' about?

WOODENSHOES I'll betcha I'm right (*Exits*)

HILLY Listen, Louie! Do you mean to say Walter didn't give you the dough he owes me?

LOUIE Walter's pretty sore You better come over and see him

HILLY But that's all settled! Walter and I are like this! (*He illustrates with two twined fingers*) I just did a swell favor for him—scooped the whole town! We're pals again! I'm telling you.

LOUIE He just told me be sure and get you, you know what I mean?

HILLY (*frantically*) I tell you that's fixed! By God, Louie, do you think I'd try to put something over on you?

LOUIE What do you mean fixed? He wants to talk to you I been looking all over—

HILLY But I did talk to him! Everything's all right! I swear to you!

LOUIE (*weakening*) Jesus, Hildy, I don't know

HILLY Certainly! My God, he wants me to go! Now listen, Louie—you've always got a lot of money—will you help me out? This two hundred and sixty bucks—Walter's sending a boy with it, but I can't wait! I gotta catch a train, see? Now—

LOUIE What two hundred and sixty bucks?

HILLY The money I spent on the story! He's sending it over, but I want you to take that and give me the money now!

LOUIE Oh! You want two hundred and sixty dollars—now

HILLY YES!

LOUIE Well, that's a lot of money, you know what I mean?

HILLY You can get it from Walter I'll give you my I O U

LOUIE Lis'en, Hildy, I'd like to help you out But I've been stung on so many I O U's lately that I made myself a promise

HILLY But this ain't an I O U
It's money comin' to me from the
paper!

LOUIE What have you got to show
for it?

HILLY Louie, listen! My whole future
is dependent on this. My girl's
waitin' at the train. I've just got fifteen
minutes to get there. If you'll
help me out, I swear. Honest to
God.

LOUIE (*interrupting*) Two hundred
and sixty dollars. That's a big
gamble!

HILLY It's no gamble at all. I'll write
out a note to Walter sayin' for him
to give you the money he owes me.

LOUIE Well, I'll tell you what I'll do
with you. I'll take a chance.

HILLY (*as he writes out note*) That's
the stuff!—You're a white man,
Louie, you're a real white man. God
—I knew I could depend on you.

LOUIE I tell you what I'll do. I'll give
you a hundred and fifty dollars for
the debt. (*Hilly stares at him*.)

HILLY That's just takin' advantage,
Louie.

LOUIE That's the best I can do.

HILLY Well, Christ! I lose almost
a hundred bucks by that.

LOUIE All right. (*Puts money back
in his pocket*) Have it your own
way.

HILLY Make it two hundred.

LOUIE One hundred and fifty!

HILLY All right, give me the dough.
(*DIAMOND LOUIE takes the paper
that HILLY has written out and reads
it very carefully, folds it, puts it in
his pocket and then proceeds to
count out the money, as HILLY is
looking for his hat and coat*.)

LOUIE Here you are. (*HILLY grabs
the money and begins to count it*)
Well, good-bye and good luck. I'll
look you up in New York—if there's
anything wrong with this. (*LOUIE
exits*.)

HILLY (*counting the money*) Ten,
twenty, thirty, thirty-five, forty-five
— (*Gets confused, starts again*) Ten,
twenty, thirty, forty, forty-five, fifty-
five— (*In trouble again, he gives up*)
The hell with it. Anyway, I get out
of this lousy place. They can take
their story now and— (*HILLY pock-
ets the money and starts hurriedly
to pick up his parcels, including his
old felt hat in a paper bag. As he
starts for the door he is arrested by
a sound at the window. The sound
is caused by EARL WILLIAMS falling
through the window into the room.
MR WILLIAMS is a little harmless-
looking man with a mustache. He
is coatless and is shod with death-
house sneakers. He carries a large
gun. He is on the verge of collapse
and holds on to a chair for support.
He talks in an exhausted voice.*
HILLY, at the sight of him, drops his
packages and stands riveted.)

EARL They're after me with search
lights.

HILLY Put—put down that gun!

EARL (*supporting himself*) It ain't
loaded. I fired all the bullets already.

HILLY Holy God Almighty! . . .

EARL (*weakly—handing HILLY the gun*) I surrender I couldn't hang off that roof any longer

HILLY Holy God!— Get away from that window (EARL obeys HILLY strides to the door and locks it He comes back and stands staring at EARL and scratches his head) Well, for God's sake .

EARL I'm not afraid to die I was tellin' the fella that when he handed me the gun

HILLY Shut up a second! (*He locks the door*)

EARL (*babbling on*) Wakin' me up in the middle of the night talkin' to me about things they don't understand Callin' me a Bolshevik I ain't a Bolshevik I'm an anarchist (HILLY is pulling down the blinds and putting out the lights) It's got nothin' to do with bombs It's the one philosophy that guarantees every man freedom (Weakly) All those poor people being crushed by the System And the boys that were killed in the war And in the slums—all those slaves to a crust of bread—I can hear 'em cryin'—

HILLY Be quiet! The hell with that Shut up! will you? (*He is hunting for a hiding place*)

EARL Go on take me back and hang me I done my best (*He crumples and falls to the floor HILLY stands for a second, desperate His eye falls on the toilet door He considers picks up WILLIAMS and hurriedly dumps him inside the toilet He closes the door and springs for the telephone*)

HILLY (*into phone*) Hello Gimme Walter Burns, quick! (*Sec-*

ond phone rings HILLY hesitates, then answers it, propping first receiver between ear and shoulder)

Hello! Hello! Oh, hello, Peggy Listen, for God's sake have a heart, will you? Something terrific has happened! (*Into first phone*) Walter? Hildy No, the hell with that Listen—come right over here Come over here right away Wait a minute (*Into second phone*) For God's sake, Peg-

gy, quit bawling me out, will you? I'm in a hell of a jam! (*Back to WALTER*) Walter! Get this—I only want to say it once I got Earl Williams Yes! Here in the press room! Honest to God! For God's sake, hurry! I need you

I will (*Hangs up Into PEGGY's phone again*) Listen, darling, this is the biggest thing that ever happened Now, wait! Don't cry Wait till I tell you (*Low voice*) I just captured Earl Williams! (*In an intense whisper*) Earl Williams the murderer! I got him

For God's sake, don't tell anybody . Aw, Peggy Peggy I can't I can't now! Good Lord! Don't you realize I know, but Peggy (*She has hung up*)

Hello, Peggy Peggy! (*HILLY hangs up the phone dejectedly During the last few speeches, there has been a knocking on the door HILLY glares apprehensively and holds himself ready for fight He moves to the door, and as he approaches it, cries*) Who is it? (*There is no answer HILLY opens the door cautiously MOLLIE bounds in like a wildcat He seizes her and wrestles with her*) Wait a minute! What the hell do you want?

MOLLIE (*wildly*) Where they gone? You know where they are

HILLY Get outa here, Mollie!

MOLLIE They got him surrounded
They're gonna shoot him—like a dog

HILLY Listen! They're lookin' for
you, too! If you're smart, you'll get
outa here

MOLLIE For God's sake, tell me
where they've gone I ain't afraid of
them, the yella murderers

HILLY I'll tell you where they are
They're out at Clark Street! That's
where they are! Clark and Fullerton!

MOLLIE Where? Where? *(The
toilet door opens and EARL WIL-
LIAMS appears, dazed and blinking
MOLLIE sees him)* Oh! *(A knock on
the outer door is heard)*

HILLY *(with a desperate look at the
door)* Oh, for Christ's—! Sh—!
*(With a desperate gesture for si-
lence, and tiptoeing towards door)*
Who is it?

WOODENSHOES *(outside)* It's me

HILLY What do you want, Wood-
enshoes?

WOODENSHOES *(outside)* I got some
important information for you
a clue

HILLY I'll be right with you I'm
making a personal call *(Turn-
ing to the two tensely)* Get back in
there! *(Indicating toilet)*

MOLLIE What's this a double
cross?

HILLY Damn it! I'm trying to save
him

WOODENSHOES *(outside)* This is
very important

MOLLIE *(to EARL)* What are you
doing here?

HILLY *(to MOLLIE)* Keep him quiet!
It's a cop! *(On his way to the door)*
I'll get rid of him *(He opens the
door cautiously and steps quickly
into the hall, leaving his arm behind
him, his hand on the inside knob of
the door Loud and friendly)* Hello,
Woodenshoes! What's on your mind?
*(During the ensuing scene a hardly
audible conversation takes place be-
tween HILLY and WOODENSHOES
HILLY's shoulder is visible in the
door)*

EARL Thank you for those roses

MOLLIE How did you get here?
Does anybody know?

EARL I came down the rainpipe I
didn't mean to shoot him I don't
know what happened

MOLLIE But what are you going to
do? You can't stay here! They'll get
you!

EARL I don't care any more

MOLLIE You've got to hide! You've
got to hide somewhere! The rats!

EARL No Don't do anything I'm
ready to go I don't care It's better
to die for a cause than the way most
people die—for no reason

MOLLIE You won't die They'll
never get you

EARL I ain't important It's human-
ity that's important, like I told you
Humanity is a wonderful thing,
Mollie

MOLLIE No, it ain't They're just dirty murderers Look what they done to you . and to me

EARL That's because they don't know any better

MOLLIE You're too good for 'em that's why

EARL You're good, too

MOLLIE (*with wonder*) Me?

EARL Yeah, I think you're wonderful I wrote out a statement today and left it with Mr Jacobi, so that when I was dead people would understand what I meant There was a lot about you in it I said you were the most beautiful character I ever met

MOLLIE (*blinking and dazed*) Yeah?

HILLY (*entering, indicating toilet*) Get back in there! The fellows are coming down the hall now! (*He locks the door*)

MOLLIE They'll find him there!

HILLY Well, there isn't any place else (*He looks helplessly around the room, at that moment someone tries the door knob*)

MOLLIE There's somebody!

HILLY Sssh!

ENDICOTT (*outside*) Who locked the door?

HILLY Coming right away, Mike (*Whispers to MOLLIE*) He's got to go in there!

ENDICOTT (*outside*) Well, for God's sake, hurry

MOLLIE Oh, my God!

HILLY Wait a minute! I got an idea! (*Springs and opens the desk*) Can you get in this desk?

WILSON (*outside*) What the hell's going on in there? (*Starts to pound on door*)

EARL What good'll it do?

HILLY We'll get you out in ten minutes

WILSON (*outside*) Open up there, will you?

HILLY All right, all right God damn it!

EARL Please, don't talk like that in front of her

MOLLIE (*to EARL*) Go on! Please! Please!

EARL They'll find me, anyhow (*More pounding*)

HILLY All right, I'm coming! (*To EARL*) Keep dead quiet Don't even breathe

MOLLIE I'll be right here I won't leave you

ENDICOTT (*outside, shouting*) Hey what the God-damn hell?

HILLY Keep your shirt on! (*He opens the door*) What are you trying to do! Kick down the building? (*ENDICOTT and WILSON enter Head for photo as at back*)

ENDICOTT Kind of exclusive ain't you? (*Sees MOLLIE*) Oh! (*Elaborately*) I beg your pardon

WILSON City desk, please! What's the idea of locking the door?

HILDY I was interviewing her

ENDICOTT (at phone) Gimme the city desk What was he doing to her?

WILSON With the blinds down (MURPHY enters)

MURPHY Where the hell you been, Hildy? There's the damnedest Halloween going on—the whole police force standing on its ear (At phone) Murphy talking Gimme the desk

WILSON (into phone) Wilson speaking No luck yet on Williams Call you back! (KRUGER enters)

KRUGER God, I never was so tired in my life

HILDY Any news?

MURPHY (into phone) This is Murphy Well, they surrounded the house, only Williams wasn't there

KRUGER Gimme a rewrite man (MC CUE enters)

MC CUE (entering) Jesus, what a chase!

MURPHY (into phone) Wait a minute They shot somebody, anyhow Here you are! Ready? Herman Schulte, the Sheriff's brother-in-law He was leading the squad through the house and was looking under a bed when Deputy John F. Watson came in the room and mistook him for Earl Shot him right in the pants Yeah A bull's eye Right (Hangs up)

HILDY (on edge) He always had lead in his pants

MC CUE (at his phone) McCue talking Gimme the desk

KRUGER (phoning) This is Kruger, out with Hartman's deputies Yeah? I'm in the drug store at Clark and Fullerton Well, call me back if you don't believe me (Hangs up)

MC CUE (into phone) That so? I'll check on it (Hangs up) There's something doing at Harrison Street Station (Into phone) Gimme Harrison 2500 Hurry it, will you please?

KRUGER (to MOLLIE, who is in the swivel chair in front of the desk) What's the idea, Mollie? Can't you flop somewhere else?

MURPHY Yeah, parking her fanny in here like it was a cathouse (Takes a sniff of the air) Fleur de Floosie, she's got on

KRUGER (neighing like a horse) Makes me passionate!

MURPHY Go on, Mollie, put it somewhere else Go out and stink up Clark Street

MOLLIE (nervous and twitching) You lay off me!

MC CUE Look out—she'll start bawling again (Into phone) I'll hold the wire Only don't forget me

HILDY Let her alone, fellas She's not doing anything

MURPHY (to HILDY) What the hell are you two so chummy about?

ENDICOTT Yeah, they were locked in here together when we come along

WILSON Wouldn't open the door

MC CUE You'll be out of training for your honeymoon—playing pin-
noche with this baby

MURPHY I thought you were going to catch a train

KRUGER He was running around here ten minutes ago with his pants on fire about going to New York

ENDICOTT Told us he was interviewing her

MURPHY What are you trying to do? Scoop us?

HILDY I'm waiting here for Walter He's coming over with some dough

MC CUE (*phoning*) Hello, Sarge McCue I hear you got a tip on Williams

WILSON Look, she's got the shakes What the hell you making faces about?

ENDICOTT (*singing childishly*) She's jealous because Hildy's going to be married

HILDY Go on— Show 'em you can smile through your tears Relax

MOLLIE You let me alone—all of you (*Schwartz enters*)

MC CUE (*into phone*) Yeah! What's the address!

SCHWARTZ Hello, fellas What the hell, Hildy? You still here?

ENDICOTT Yeah, and trying to hang something on us, if you ask me What's the low-down, Hildy?

SCHWARTZ Who the hell pulled these shades down?

MC CUE (*turning from phone*) Hey! this looks good An old lady just called up the detective bureau and claims Williams is hiding under her piazza

ENDICOTT Tell her to stand up

MURPHY Who you got there?

MC CUE The Captain

MURPHY Let me talk to him (*Taking the phone*) Hello, Turkey How's your gussie mollie? I hear this guy Williams is hiding in your mustache Yeah? Well, get your nose out of the way (*Hangs up Points to MOLLIE's crossed and highly visible legs*) Oooh! Lookit! Pike's Peak!

MC CUE Listen, fellows, that sounds like a pretty good tip What do you say?

HILDY If you boys want to get out I'll cover this end for you

ENDICOTT Aw, the hell with chasing around any more I spent a dollar forty on taxis already

KRUGER (*flat on his back*) Don't let's do any more going out

SCHWARTZ (*who has gone to the window*) If you ask me, I got a hunch Williams ain't anywhere they been looking for him

WILSON How do you mean?

SCHWARTZ Well, I just been talking to Jacob's about that roof he's supposed to have jumped off of Look! Now there's that skylight he got out of

ENDICOTT Where?

MC CUE (*looking out*) Jesus, how could he get from there to the ground?

SCHWARTZ That's just the point Jacob's gone up there with a couple of cops to look over the whole roof

MC CUE (*leaning out*) I tell you what he could have done, though Look! He could have jumped over to this roof That's only about four feet

ENDICOTT Yeah, he could have done that, all right

KRUCER (*wearily*) I'm pretending there ain't no Earl Williams

SCHWARTZ And that's why I'm telling you guys that I don't think this guy Williams is anywhere they been looking for him I got a stinking hunch he's right in this building

HILDY (*derisive*) Hanging around like a duck in a shootin' gallery, I suppose! You're a lot of bright guys

MC CUE (*still looking*) It'd be easy, once he got on this roof

HILDY (*with nervous hilarity*) Hey—Sherlock Holmes, what correspondence school did you graduate from?

SCHWARTZ What's the matter with that? He could come down the rain-

pipe and crawl into any one of these windows on this side

KRUCER Well if the story's going to walk right in the window—!

HILDY The master minds at work! Why don't you guys go home—he'll probably call on you (*BENSINGER enters and approaches his desk* MOLLIE, *sitting in his chair, is hidden from him at the moment by one or two of the reporters*)

BENSINGER Hello, Hildy Thought you were going to New York (*HILDY has sprung into action with BENSINGER's entrance* BENSINGER *sees* MOLLIE) For God's sake, what's she doing in my chair? (*MOLLIE springs up*) Is that the only place you can sit? That's my property and I don't want anybody using it!

HILDY (*leaning against the closed desk*) Nobody's using it, Roy Everything's all right

BENSINGER (*anxiously*) Any of you fellows got some aspirin?

ENDICOTT No, sweetheart, but I got some nice cyanide

BENSINGER (*sitting down*) Cut the kidding, fellows I tell you I'm sick

SCHWARTZ How about a good truss? I'll sell it to you cheap

HILDY What's the matter, Roy? Off your feed?

BENSINGER If I haven't got a good case of grippe coming, I miss my guess (*Reaching for desk cover*) Get out of the way, will you?

HILDY (*not moving*) I hope you didn't get it off me

BENSINGER I got it off somebody
Everybody using my phone all the
time—it's a wonder I ain't caught
anything worse (*Pushing HILLY
slightly*) Look out, I got to get my
cup

HILLY (*doubling up as if with a vio-
lent cramp*) Wait a minute, will
you?

BENSINGER (*frightened*) What's the
matter?

HILLY (*faintly*) I don't know, oh—

BENSINGER Don't you feel all right?

HILLY No (*Coughs violently in
BENSINGER's face*)

BENSINGER Don't do that!

HILLY (*weakly*) Do what?

BENSINGER Cough on a guy! Jesus!

HILLY Well, I don't know what's
the matter I suddenly got a pain
right— (*Vaguely indicates his throat*)
and a kind of rash on my chest
(*Opening his shirt*)

BENSINGER (*recoiling*) What?
You've probably got some disease!

MURPHY Sure! He's got the pazoza!

HILLY (*advancing on BENSINGER,
tries to take his hand*) Feel! Ain't
that fever?

BENSINGER (*retreating from the
desk*) Hey, cut it out! It may be
diphtheria!

HILLY I woke up this morning, and
had yellow spots all over my stomach

BENSINGER That ain't funny!

KRUGER For God's sake, Roy, can't
you see he's kidding you (*HILLY fol-
lowing BENSINGER, seizes him*)

BENSINGER Let go of me! You may
have something contagious! If you're
sick go to a hospital! (*HILLY coughs
in his face*) For the love of God!

MURPHY It's no worse than a bad
cold, Roy

HILLY (*opening his mouth*) Can
you see anything in there? Aaah!

BENSINGER Listen, fellows! You ain't
got any sense, letting him hang
around here. We'll all catch it, what-
ever it is! (*They all laugh*) All right,
laugh! But I'm going to get this place
fumigated!

MURPHY The hell you are!

BENSINGER (*furiously*) The hell I
ain't! We got to breathe this air! I'm
gonna get Doc Springer and clean
this whole place up! You God-damn
maniacs (*Exits HILLY leans weakly
up against the desk and laughs hysterically*)

ENDICOTT What's the idea, Hilly?
Now he'll be burning sulphur for
a week like last time

MC CUF Yeah, you're leavin', but
we gotta work here, with all them
stink pots. What a sense of
humor you got

SCHWARIZ Now look here! What
about Williams? Let's get the cops
and search the building! What do
you say?

ENDICOTT I could use that reward

112 BEN HECHT AND CHARLES MAC ARTHUR

MURPHY What the hell could you do with ten grand? What do you say? Do you want to try it?

ENDICOTT You could have a girl in every room at the Sherman Hotel for that MRS GRANT (*enters, in a very righteous mood*) Well!

MURPHY You'd never get past the basement HILDA (*stricken*) Now—now, listen, mother—

MC CUE It would be funny if we found him right here in the building MRS GRANT Don't you mother me! If you've got anything to say for yourself you come downstairs and say it to Peggy

SCHWARTZ What do you say? Should we get the cops? HILDA Listen, mother, tell Peggy I'll be downstairs in five minutes, will you? Will you go down and tell her that?

MURPHY Call up Vicut Callahan, Mac Tell him we got a hot tip

HILDA Wait! What do you want to call the cops for? Suppose he is in the building They'll grab all the reward and you guys won't get a smell MRS GRANT No, sir—I don't move out of here without you

SCHWARTZ Huh?

WILSON That's right

HILDA Listen! Each of us take a floor and whoever finds him, we split it up What do you say? HILDA I listen, mother, you don't understand Now I told Peggy—

WILSON That's not a bad idea

KRUCER I'll stay here

HILDA Two grand apiece! Why we could retire for life! You could pay off all those loan sharks, Jimmie, and have enough left to stay stinko forever! MRS GRANT I know what you told her! A lot of gibberish, about a murderer!

MC CUE I don't know, getting my can blown off HILDA No, No! I don't know what she's talking about! I didn't tell her any such thing

HILDA What else is it good for? Besides, he can't hurt anybody

MRS GRANT Yes you did!

THE REPORTERS I knew something stunk around here Who says he caught him? What's going on What do you mean caught a murderer? etc (*In the midst of this babel, WOODENSHOES enters, stands listening*)

MOLLIE He never told her that!

WOODENSHOES Where is he?

HILLY I said I was trying to catch one, that's all! You got it balled up, mother!

MOLLIE Go find out, you lousy heels! You don't think I'm gonna tell!

MURPHY (to MOLLIE) What do you know about it? How do you know he didn't?

WOODENSHOES You'll tell all right! We'll make you

MOLLIE Let go of my arm!

MOLLIE (slowly backing toward the door) Yeah? Yeah the hell I will

ENDICOTT Hilly and that tart were in here together!

HILLY (who has remained riveted to the desk) Let her alone she's goofy! (MOLLIE lunges suddenly for the door)

WOODENSHOES Yah! Yah! She's the one that knows! Ask her!

MURPHY (wheeling on him) What do you mean she knows?

THE REPORTERS Look out! Close that door For Christ's sake! Don't let her get away (She is headed off at the door)

WOODENSHOES Serchay la femme! (To MOLLIE) Where's Earl Williams?

MC CUE You ain't gettin' out o' here, Mollie

MOLLIE How the hell should I know?

ENDICOTT Now where is he? In the building?

WOODENSHOES Where have you got him hid?

MC CUE Where you hidin' him?

MURPHY (viciously) Who you holding out on, Hilly? Come clean, or God damn it, we'll knock it out of you! (The REPORTERS surround HILLY menacingly)

MOLLIE I ain't gonna squeal! I ain't gonna squeal!

MURPHY (approaching her slowly) Come on you lousy tart! Before we kick your teeth out!

MC CUE Yeah What the hell! Sock him, Jimmie!

ENDICOTT D'ye want us to call the cops and give you the boots?

ENDICOTT You dirty double-crosser

MURPHY Go on, Woodenshoes Slap it out of her!

MOLLIE (wildly) Wait! You God damn stool pigeons! He don't know where Earl Williams is I'm the one that knows

WOODENSHOES (reaching for her) Come on now Where is he before I hurt you?

ENDICOTT What do you mean you know? (The REPORTERS turn on MOLLIE)

MOLLIE (tearing away from him, wild and blubbing) Take you

hands off me, you God-damn kidney foot! (She snatches at a chair and swings it at the slowly advancing circle of men) Let me alone or I'll knock your God-damn heads off

ENDICOTT Put down that chair!

SCHWARTZ Get around—get on the side of her

MOLLIE (backing away, swinging her chair) No you don't! You bastards! Keep away from me!

KRUGER Grab her

MOLLIE (with a last wild look at the circling foe) You'll never get it out of me (She hurls the chair at their heads and screams) I'll never tell! Never! (She leaps for the open window and disappears Her scream of terror and exultation is heard as she drops through the darkness to the ground The REPORTERS stand riveted for an instant, powerless before the tragedy Then they rush forward An assortment of awed and astonished oaths rise from them They lean out of the window WOODENSHOES the Theorist stands sick at heart His body is doubled up with pain for a moment Through the babble of cries his voice comes thickly)

WOODENSHOES Oh! I never thought she'd do that! That's terrible

MRS GRANT (coming out of a trance) Take me out of here! Take me out of here! Oh my God! (She collapses in a chair)

THE REPORTERS (at the window) She ain't killed No She's moving Get the cops, Wooden-shoes Come on fellas

HILDY Holy God—the poor kid the poor kid (Voices come from the jail yard—"Hey Carl Get a doctor! What the hell! Who is it? What happened?" etc The REPORTERS rush out to get to MOLLIE HILDY stands dazed, looking out of the window MRS GRANT moans through her hands As the vibrations subside a newcomer is standing in the door This is MR WALTER BURNS, the Managing Editor Beneath a dapper and very citizen-like exterior lurks a hobgoblin, perhaps the Devil himself But if MR BURNS is the Devil he is a very naïf one He is a Devil with neither point nor purpose to him—an undignified Devil hatched for a bourgeois Hallowe'en In less hyperbolic language MR BURNS is that product of thoughtless, pointless, nerve-drumming unmorality that is the Boss Journalist—the licensed eavesdropper, trouble maker, bombardier and Town Snitch, misnamed The Press At this moment MR BURNS, in the discharge of his high calling, stands in the door nerveless and meditative as a child his mind open to such troubles as he can find or create)

HILDY (seeing him) Walter! My God—did you see that?

WALTER (quietly) Yes Where is he?

HILDY She jumped out of the window

WALTER I know Where is he, I said?

HILDY (looking out of the window) She's moving! Thank God she ain't killed herself!

WALTER Come to, Hildy! Where have you got Williams?

HILDY (*still absorbed in the matter*) Huh? He's—he's in the desk (*As WALTER goes to desk*) Thank God she ain't dead (*WALTER opens desk a crack*)

EARL (*muffled*) Let me out, I can't stand it!

WALTER Keep quiet! You're sitting pretty

MRS GRANT (*staring at the Editor*) What's the matter?

WALTER (*he wheels*) Who the hell is that?

HILDY It's my girl's mother

MRS GRANT What are you doing? Oh, my God!

WALTER Shut up!

MRS GRANT I won't shut up! That girl killed herself Oh! You're doing something wrong What's in there? (*DIAMOND LOUIE appears in the doorway*)

HILDY Now, mother, please!

WALTER Take her out of here, will you?

MRS GRANT What did you say?

HILDY Now look here, Walter—

WALTER Louie, take this lady over to Polack Mike's, and lock her up See that she don't talk to anyone on the way!

MRS GRANT What's that? What's that?

HILDY (*startled*) Aw, now, Walter, you can't do that!

LOUIE (*calls*) Hey, Tony!

MRS GRANT Don't you touch me!

WALTER Tell 'em it's a case of delirium tremens

LOUIE Tony, give me a hand with this lady

HILDY (*helplessly*) Listen, Walter, this'll get me in a hell of a jam (*To MRS GRANT who, a hand over her mouth, is being dragged off, her heels trailing*) Now don't worry, mother, this is only temporary Honest to God, Walter

MRS GRANT (*vaguely heard*) Peggy, Peggy! Oh, my God! (*Exit TONY, LOUIE and MRS GRANT HILDY starts out*)

WALTER (*grabs his arm*) Where the hell do you think you're going?

HILDY Let go of me! I gotta get my girl! She's downstairs in a cab all alone

WALTER Your girl! Good God, what are you? Some puking college boy! Why, in time of war you could be shot for what you're doing—for less than you're doing!

HILDY To hell with you—there's your story—locked up in that desk! Smear it all over the front page—Earl Williams caught by the Examiner—and take all the credit I covered your story and I covered it God damn right Now I'm gettin' out . .

WALTER You drooling saphead
What do you mean—a story? You've
got the whole city by the seat of the
pants!

HILLY I know all about that, but

WALTER You know hell—You got
the brains of a pancake Listen,
Hilly if I didn't have your interests
at heart would I be wastin' time now
arguin' with you! You've done some-
thin' big—you've stepped into a new
class

HILLY (*D'Artagnan never gave
Richelieu an ear more startled or
more innocent*) Huh?

WALTER Listen, we'll make such
monkey's out of these ward heelers
that nobody will vote for them—
not even their wives

HILLY Expose 'em, huh .

WALTER Expose 'em! Crucify 'em!
We're gonna keep Williams under
cover till morning so's the Examiner
can break the story exclusive
Then we'll let the Senator in on the
capture—share the glory with him

HILLY I see—I see! (*Blinking and
warming up*)

WALTER You've kicked over the
whole City Hall like an applecart
You've got the Mayor and Hartman
back against a wall You've put one
administration out and another in
This ain't a newspaper story—
it's a career And you standin' there
bellyachin' about some girl

HILLY Jesus, I— I wasn't figuring it
that way, I guess We'll be the white-
haired boys, won't we?

WALTER Why, they'll be naming
streets after you Johnson Street! You
and I and the Senator are going to
run this town Do you under-
stand that?

HILLY Yeah Yeah! But—wait
a minute—we can't leave Williams
here One of those reporters'll

WALTER We're going to take him
over to my private office right away
Where's the Examiner phone?

HILLY That one The red one How
the hell you gonna do it? They'll see
him!

WALTER Not if he's inside the desk
We'll carry the desk over (*Into
phone*) Hello! Examiner Give me
Duffy I'd have had him there
now if you hadn't give me such an
argument

HILLY You can't take that out It's
crawling with cops outside

WALTER We'll lower it out of the
window with pulleys Quit stallin'
(*To HILLY*) Hilly! Get that machine
and start pounding out a lead, will
you Come on—snap into it

HILLY How much you want on
it?

WALTER All the words you got .

HILLY Where the hell is there some
paper?

WALTER (*into phone*) Hello
Hello!

HILLY (*moving for BENSINGER'S
desk*) Can I call the Mayor an ani-
mal at bay?

WALTER Call him a nigger if you want to! Come on! Come on!

HILDA How about that time he had his house painted by the fire department

WALTER Give him the works
(*Into phone*) Hello, Duffy. Get set! We got the biggest story in the world Earl Williams caught by the Examiner exclusive (HILDA has opened the drawers of BEN SINGER's desk and in a frantic search for paper is tossing play manuscripts, syringes, patent medicines and old socks in the air)

WALTER (*continuing into phone*) Duffy! Send down word to Butch McGuirk I want ten huskies from the circulation department to 'am right over here—press room criminal courts building That's what I said—Butch McGuirk (*To HILDA*) He'll get that desk out—nothin' ever stopped those boys yet (HILDA has unearthed a full package of BEN-SINGER's personal stationery He now picks up the typewriter) What if they start shootin'?

WALTER Fine! (*Into phone*) Now listen, Duffy. I want you to tear out the whole front page That's what I said—the whole front page out (*Into phone*) Johnson's writing the lead
(PEGGY enters—a desperate and strident antagonist)

PEGGY Hilda!

WALTER What the hell do you want?

PEGGY Hilda!

HILDA (*holding the typewriter in his arms Dazed*) What?

WALTER Listen, Miss, you can't come in here! (*Into phone*) To hell with the Chinese earthquake! What's that?

HILDA Listen, darling—

PEGGY Where's mother?

WALTER (*into phone*) I don't care if there's a million dead

HILDA Peggy I got to ask you to do something! A big favor!

PEGGY You're not coming!

WALTER (*into phone*) What? I don't hear you

HILDA Now don't get sore and fly off the handle, darling What happened was—

PEGGY You're not! Are you? Tell me Hilda! Tell me the truth!

WALTER (*into phone*) Take all those Miss America pictures off Page 6 Wait a minute, Duffy (*Turns*) Now look here, little girl—

PEGGY (*whirls on WALTER*) You're doing this to him! He was going and you stopped him!

HILDA Something terrific's happened, Peggy! Wait til I tell you! I couldn't—

WALTER You'll tell her nothing! She's a woman, you damn fool!

PEGGY Well, I'm not going to let you do it! You're coming right now! With me!

WALTER Holy God!

HILDY But it's the biggest chance of my life Now listen, darling—

WALTER (*frenzied*) Shut up, will you?

PEGGY You don't *want* to marry me! That's all!

HILDY (*putting down the typewriter*) That ain't true! Just because you won't listen you're saying I don't love you when you know I'd cut off my hands for you! I'd do anything in the world for you! Anything!

WALTER (*into phone*) Hello, Duffy! What? What's that? To hell with the League of Nations! Spike it!

PEGGY You never intended to be decent and live like a human being! You were lying all the time!

HILDY Peggy, don't keep saying that!

WALTER (*into phone*) What's that? What?

PEGGY Lying! That's what you were! Just lying!

HILDY (*his tortured male spirit takes refuge in hysteria*) All right! If that's what you think!

WALTER (*shouting at the lovers*) H Sebastian God! I'm trying to concentrate!

PEGGY I see what you are now! You're just a bum! Like him—(*Indicates WALTER*) and all the rest!

HILDY Sure! That's what I am!

WALTER (*into phone*) No! Leave the rooster story alone—that's human interest!

PEGGY You're just a heartless selfish animal without any feelings! (*To WALTER*) And you're worse! It's all your fault and if you think I'm going to put up with it—

WALTER Shut up, will you? (*Into phone*) Duffy, let me talk to Butch—

HILDY Shut up, will you? Yeah! That's what I am! A bum! Without any feelings! And that's all I want to be!

WALTER (*into phone*) Get a hold o' Butch as fast as you can

PEGGY You never did love me or you couldn't talk to me like that! (*The desk top opens slowly and EARL WILKINS sticks his head out*)

WALTER (*screaming across the room*) Get back in there—you God-damn turtle (*The desk top falls, the fugitive disappears within and PEGGY, her heartbreak audible in her sobs, moves blindly toward the door*)

HILDY (*sitting before his typewriter calls after her, his voice tormented but his egoism intact*) If you want me you'll have to like me as I am instead of trying to turn me into some lah de dah with a cane! I'm no stuffed shirt writing pernut ads God damn it—I'm a newspaper man (*PEGGY exits, her sobs filling the room and corridor*)

WALTER Shut up! (*Into phone as the curtain is falling*) Hello, Duffy!

The edition gone in yet? . Well don't . Never mind the mail trains . You ain't working for the advertising department . The hell with Marshall Field's! 'Stick on this wire!

HILLY (*has started typing* The click of the keys stops suddenly and he rips the piece of copy paper from the machine He is not quite himself—he has made an error in his lead) . God damn it—

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

The same scene, five minutes later HILLY is typing furiously WALTER is pacing up and down He finally picks up the receiver, which has been standing on the table Into phone, with moderate excitement

WALTER Duffy Duffy! (To HILLY) God damn it! I told him to stay on that phone If I had a few people who did what they were told I could get something accomplished

I bet he never told 'em to take taxis Butch and the gang are probably walking over here (*Looking out of the window*) Oh, for Chris' sake Now the moon's out! (HILLY types on WALTER skitters to the desk and taps three times EARL taps back three times from within) Fine! Three taps is me! Don't forget! You're sitting pretty now Got enough air? (*He raises the roll top an inch or two and fans air in with his hand*) Is that better? (*Closing the desk and going to phone*) Lam into 'em, Hilly! Below the belt! Every punch! (*Into phone, with great sarcasm*) Hello!

Duffy! Where the hell you been? Well, the hell with your diabetes! You stick on this phone! Listen, did you impress it on Butch to take a taxi—that every minute counts? Who's he bringing with him? What

do you mean, you don't know? But you told Butch it was life and death huh? All right, stick on the wire! (*Putting down receiver*) Duffy's getting old Well, Butch is on the way, Hilly All we got to do is hold out for fifteen minutes

HILLY (*over his typing*) The boys'll be back They'll be coming in to phone

WALTER I'll handle them It's that three toed Sheriff I'm worrying about If he starts sticking his snout into this (*Cudgeling his brain*) I wonder if we could arrest him for anything? (HILLY *has never ceased his typing*) Did you ever get the dope on that stenographer he seduced?

HILLY (*over his shoulder*) That was the coroner

WALTER Haven't we got anything on him—besides graft?

HILDY (*thoughtfully*) He's got an idiot kid in the asylum

WALTER (*depressed*) I don't see how we can use that against him (*Brightening*) Wait a minute! Idiot kid idiot kid (*He meditates, then sighs*) No, that's impractical (*Approaching HILDY*) What's your lead?

HILDY (*with authorly pride*) "While hundreds of Sheriff Hartman's paid gunmen stalked through Chicago shooting innocent bystanders, spreading their reign of terror, Earl Williams was lurking less than twenty yards from the Sheriff's office where

WALTER That's lousy! Aren't you going to mention the Examiner? Don't we take any credit?

HILDY I'm putting that in the second paragraph

WALTER Who the hell's going to read the second paragraph? Ten years I've been telling you how to write a newspaper story—My God, have I got to do everything? Get the story? Write the story?

HILDY Listen, you bastard! I can blow better newspaper stories out of my nose than you can write!

WALTER (*cackling*) "While hundreds of paid gunmen are out taking a walk " God, that stinks! You ought to go back to chasing pictures!

HILDY Yeah?

WALTER You were good at that!

HILDY You ungrateful bastard! Who wrote the Fitzgerald confession?

Who wrote Ruth Randall's diary? How about the Dayton flood? Even the telegraph operator was crying!

WALTER All right, make me cry now! (*Into phone*) Duffy! Listen, Duffy! What's the name of that religious editor of ours? The fellow with the dirty collar? Sipper? Well, tell the Reverend Sipperly I want to see him right away! (*To HILDY*) Do you know what I'm gonna do?

HILDY Shut up, or I'll throw this typewriter at your head!

WALTER (*happily*) I'm going to get the Reverend Sipperly to make up a prayer for the City of Chicago—right across the top of the paper! "Our Father Who art in Heaven—There were four hundred and twentyone murders in Chicago last year!" All in religious lingo see? Eight columns Old English Bold-face! The God-damnedest prayer you ever heard (*Awed at his own resourcefulness*) Christ, what an ideal!

HILDY You better pray that this desk will float out of the window over to the paper

WALTER Wait a minute, Hildy (*The Pentecostal fire upon him*) Wait, wait! I got an inspiration! Now take this down, just as I saw it! (*He yanks a page from the typewriter*)

HILDY (*leaping*) Some day you're going to do that, Walter, and I'm gonna belt you in the jaw! You God damn Know it-all!

WALTER (*chanting*) Here's your lead "The Chicago Examiner again

rode to the rescue of the city last night in the darkest hour of her history! (*Lowering his voice*) Earl Williams—Earl Williams, the Bolshevik Tiger, who leaped snarling from the gallows upon the flanks of the city, was captured

HILLY I got you! I got you!

WAITER Go on from *there!* (*HILLY is hurriedly putting another sheet into the machine as the door knob is rattled A pause*)

HILLY What do you want to do?

BENSINGER'S VOICE (*outside*)
What's the idea of locking that door?

HILLY That's Bensinger That's his desk

WALTER What's his name again?
(*The door knob is rattled violently*)

HILLY Bensinger Reporter for the Tribune Covers the building

BENSINGER'S VOICE Open this door, will you? Who's in there?

WAITER I'll handle him! The Tribune, eh? Watch me (*He opens the door Bensinger appears*)

BENSINGER (*entering*) Ain't you got any more sense than to (*Sees*

WALTER *Is overcome at this visitation*) Oh, hello, Mr Burns Why, quite an honor, having you come over here

WALTER (*casually*) Hello, Bensinger

BENSINGER Excuse me I just want to— (*Starts for the desk*)

WALTER (*blocking his path*) Quite a coincidence, my running into you tonight Isn't it, Hilly?

HILLY Yeah

BENSINGER How do you mean?

WALTER I was having a little chat about you just this afternoon—with Mr Duffy

BENSINGER Is that so? (*Essaying a pleasantry*) Nothing detrimental, I hope

WALTER I should say not! That was one swell story you had in the paper this morning

BENSINGER (*deeply moved*) Well, I'm glad you think so, Mr Burns Did you care for the poem?

WALTER The poem? The poem was great! I got a big kick out of that

BENSINGER (*blinking at these sweet words*) Did you like the ending? (*He recites*)

" And all is well, outside his cell
But in his heart he hears
The hangman calling and the gallows
falling
And his white-haired mother's
tears "

WALTER (*overcome*) Heartbreaking! Isn't it, Hilly? Bensinger, how would you like to work for me?

BENSINGER What!

WALTER I mean it We need somebody like you All we got now is a lot of lowbrows and legmen Like Johnson, here (*Pushing BENSINGER far her from the desk*) I tell you what

you do Go over and talk to Duffy now I just had him on the phone You'll catch him if you hurry

BENSINGER You mean seriously, Mr Burns?

WALTER I'll show you how serious I am (*Clinging to BENSINGER's pants he takes him to the phone Into phone*) Duffy! I'm sending Bensing-
singer over to see you (*To BENSINGER*) Marvin, isn't it?

BENSINGER No Roy Roy V

WALTER Funny I should forget that! (*Into phone*) Roy Bensing-
singer, the poet Put him right on the staff!

BENSINGER Right away, you mean?

WALTER (*into phone*) Never mind what doing He'll tell you No, I'll talk salary with him right here (*To Roy*) How much you getting on the Tribune, Roy?

BENSINGER Seventy-five

WALTER Bensing-er, I'll give you a hundred and a by-line (*Into phone*) He's to get a hundred and a by-line, Duffy Tell the cashier Let him have everything he wants He can use the big desk in the corner (*To BENSINGER dropping receiver*) Now hustle right over to the office and tell Duffy I've—I've assigned you to write the human interest side of the man hunt I want it from the point of view of the escaped man (*Acting it out*) He hides cowering afraid of every light, of every sound hears footsteps his heart going like that And all the time they're closing in get the sense of an animal at bay!

BENSINGER Sort of a Jack London style?

WALTER Exactly Now you ain't got a minute to lose Hop right over to the office

BENSINGER Well, I don't know about quitting the Tribune that way, Mr Burns It's not quite ethical

WALTER What did they ever do for you? They've never considered your interests—that is, from what I hear

BENSINGER Well, between you and me they have given me a pretty rotten deal The way they handle my copy's a shame—just butcher it

WALTER Your copy will be sorted on the Examiner I guarantee that personally (*He edges BENSINGER toward the door*)

BENSINGER (*the artist*) You can't lop off the end of a story and get the same effect The whole feeling goes

WALTER Of course Now I want a real Bensing-er story tomorrow morning, with a crackerjack poem on the side (*He has him nearly to the door*)

BENSINGER (*indicating his desk*) I got my rhyming dictionary in

WALTER It don't have to rhyme! Now duck!

BENSINGER Gee, I'm terribly grateful, Mr Burns (*Pausing in the doorway*) Do you suppose there might be an opening some time as foreign correspondent? I parlay a little French, you know

WALTER (*shaking hands with him and pushing him out*) That'll all depend on your self I'll keep you in mind

BENSINGER (*on his way to Garcia*) Well, au revoir, mon capitaine!

WALTER (*never at a loss in any language*) Bon jour! (*WALTER closes the door and skips to the phone. Into phone*) Dusty! Listen Now get this! A God damn Tribune sneak is coming over to get a job Yeah, Bensinger, the fellow I told you about Now listen, handle him with kid gloves and tell him to get busy writing poetry No no! We don't want him But wait till he gets through Then tell him his poetry stinks and kick him down the stairs

(*Lays recorder down To HILDA*) His white-haired mother's tears! (*Picks up HILDA's copy*) Come on Hilda, tear into it! Don't sit there like a frozen robin!

HILDA (*coming out of the ether*) You've just bitched up my whole life! That's what you've done!

WALTER (*oblivious to this mood*) Listen, Hilda We ought to have our plans all set when Butch gets here All we can look for out of that guy is pure, peasant strength A mental blank (*Sentimentally*) But he'd go through hell for me!

HILDA What a fine horse's bustle I turned out to be!

WALTER (*as before*) The window's out We'll have him pick it up and walk right out of the building with it With ten guys it'll be a cinch

HILDA She was the most wonderful girl I'll ever know (WALTER

looks at him in horror and disgust) She had spirit, brains, looks everything!

WALTER Who the hell you talking about?

HILDA My girl! God damn it! Who do you think?

WALTER What are you going to do? Start mumbling about your girl now? You got a story to write!

HILDA I practically told her to go to hell—like she was some waitress!

WALTER You acted like a man for the first time in your life! Now, don't start crawling now!

HILDA I'll never love anybody else again! They don't come like that twice in a man's life

WALTER You'll sleep it off Now listen Hilda I got enough on my mind!

HILDA When she was sick in the hospital and you sent me on that wild goose chase all over Kentucky for three weeks she never even complained

WALTER Ha, ha Sick in the hospital!

HILDA Damn it, she was! She nearly died!

WALTER I see She didn't complain, but she just nearly died! That's all!

HILDA (*almost to himself*) I would have been on the train now I would have been

WALTER (*confidentially*) Listen, Hilda I was in love once—with

my third wife I treated her white—
let her have a maid and everything!
I was sweet to her!

HILLY Who cares about your God
damned wife?

WALTER I trusted her Then I let
her meet a certain party on the Trib-
une and what happened? One night
I came home unexpectedly—I let my-
self in through the bathroom win-
dow—and there they were! In bed

HILLY I don't want to hear about
your troubles I got enough

WALTER (*interrupting ecstatically*)
The very next morning, what do I
find in the Tribune, all over the front
page? My traction story, I'd been sav-
ing for two months!

HILLY You know a lot about women!
You and your God damn stable of
tarts! You never met a decent woman!
You wouldn't know what to do with
a pure girl!

WALTER (*owlishly*) Oh, yes I
would!

HILLY You take that back!

WALTER (*deciding to reason with his
young friend*) What do you think
women are? Flowers? Take that dame
that shot the dentist! And Mrs. Ver-
milya! Husband comes home all worn
out, hungry, takes a spoonful of soup
and falls dead! Arsenic! And Mrs.
Petras! Burning her husband up in
a furnace! When you've been in this
business as long as I have you'll know
what women are! Murderers! Bor-
gas!

HILLY My God, I'm a sap! Falling
for your line of crap Naming
streets after me!

WALTER Now, listen Hildy You've
had a good rest Get back on the
story That's all you got to do
(*Hands him a pocket flask*) Here
You're just nervous

HILLY I'll take that! (*Goes to
the water cooler Pouring*) I'll get
stewed tonight, and I'm gonna stay
stewed for the rest of my life! Yeah,
I'll be a newspaperman! Right in
your class! (*The door knob is tried*)

WALTER (*whispering*) Shut up!

HILLY On my pratt in a monkey
cage!

WALTER Shut up, you fathead!
(*HILLY drinks The knocking con-
tinues WALTER approaches the
door*) If that's Bersinger again, we'll
crown him and throw him in the can
for keeps! (*To the door*) Who is it?

DIAMOND LOUIE (*outside*) Hello,
Boss

WALTER It's Louie (*He opens
the door DIAMOND LOUIE appears,
bearing some evidence of a mishap
His hat is crushed, face bruised,
clothes torn WALTER sees this with
alarm*) My God, what's the matter!

HILLY (*frantically*) Where's the old
lady?

WALTER What did you do with her?

HILLY What the hell happened?

WALTER You been in a fight?

LOUIE (*still out of breath*) Down
Wentworth Avenue We were going
sixty-five miles an hour, you know
what I mean?

WALTER Take the mush out of your mouth!

HILLY Where's the old lady!

LOUIE I'm *telling* you! We run smack into a police patrol You know what I mean? We broke it in half!

HILLY My God! Was she hurt?

WALTER Where is she? Tell me!

HILLY For God's sake, Louie!

LOUIE I'm *telling* you Can you imagine bumping into a load of cops? They come rolling out like oranges!

HILLY (*seizing him*) What did you do with her, God damn you!

WALTER What became of her, I'm asking you!

LOUIE Search me! When I come to I was running down Thirty-fifth Street! Get me?

HILLY You were with her! You were in the cab, weren't you!

LOUIE (*exposing his bruised scalp*) Was I! Tony got knocked cold!

WALTER You God-damn butter-fingers! I give you an old lady to take somewhere and you hand her over to the cops!

LOUIE What do you mean, I hand her? The patrol wagon was on the wrong side of the street!

WALTER (*bitterly*) Oh, my God! She's probably squawking her head off in some police station! Now everything is *fine*

LOUIE (*holding his head*) I don't think she's talking much, you know what I mean! (*He winks reassuringly*)

HILLY My God! Was she killed?

WALTER (*hopefully*) Was she? Did you notice?

LOUIE Sav, with that alky rap and the bank job and the big blow on my hip! I should stick around asking questions from a lot of cops!

HILLY (*overcome*) Oh, my God! Dead! That finishes me!

WALTER Listen, Hildy That's Fate What will be, will be!

HILLY (*wildly*) What am I going to say to Peggy, for God's sake! What'll I tell her?

WALTER You're never going to see her again Snap out of it! Would you rather have the old dame dragging the whole police force in here?

HILLY I killed her! I did it! Oh, my God, what can I do *now*? How can I ever face her?

WALTER (*becoming the entire Iron Legion*) Listen, Hildy, if it was my own mother, I'd carry on, you know I would!

HILLY You God-damn murdering bastard!

WALTER (*crescendo*) No matter how I felt! If my heart was breaking! I'd carry on! For the paper!

HILLY (*to LOUIE*) Where was it? I'll go out!

WALTER You stay here! I'll find out everything! *(Into phone)* Duffy! Just a minute *(To LOUIE)* Where was it?

LOUIE Wentworth and Thirty-fourth near the corner

WALTER *(into phone)* Call up the Thirty-fifth Street station and ask Nick Gallagher if he's got a report on any old lady that was in a smash-up at Thirty-fourth and Wentworth *(To HILLY)* What's her name?

HILLY *(brokenly)* Mrs Amelia Grant

WALTER *(into phone)* Millie Grant About fifty-seven? *(With an enquiring look at HILLY)* Refined White hair Blue eyes Black cotton stockings She was wearing rubbers *(To HILLY, pleased)* How's that for noticing?

HILLY *(grabbing a phone)* Gimme an outside wire

WALTER *Never mind* We'll get the dope right here in two minutes! *(Another phone rings)*

HILLY *(into phone)* Gimme Wentworth, Four, five, five, seven!

WALTER *(answering the other telephone in guarded tones)* Hello Hello Who? *(Wildly)* Hello, Butch! Where are you!

HILLY *(into phone)* Pissivant Hospital? Gimme the Receiving Room, will you?

WALTER Hello? You mean you're in a hotel? What are you doing there! Ain't you even started?

HILLY *(into phone)* Hello, Eddie Hildy Johnson Was there an old lady brought in from an auto smash-up?

WALTER *(panic)* Oh, for *(Screaming)* H Sebastian God! Butch! Listen, it's a matter of life and death, Butch! Listen!

HILLY *(into phone)* Nobody? *(Jiggles hook)* Archer three one two four

WALTER *(into phone)* I can't hear you! You got who? Speak up! A what? !!! Holy God, you can't stop for a dame now!

HILLY *(into phone)* Is this the German Deaconess Hospital?

WALTER *(howling)* I don't care if you've been trying to make her for six years! Now, listen, Butch! Our whole lives are at stake! Are you going to let some blonde pushover ruin everything? What do you mean—an hour? It'll be too late in an hour!

HILLY *(into phone)* Hello, Max Hildy Johnson Was there an old lady

WALTER Butch! I'd put my arm in the fire for you up to here! *(Indicates up to where)* I'd go through hell for you! Now you ain't gonna double cross me She does? All right—put her on the wire I'll talk to her Hello! Oh, hello, Madam! Now listen here, you God-damn bum You can't keep Butch away from his duty! What! What! !!!

What kind of language is that! Hello, hello *(Turning to LOUIE hanging up the telephone)* That tub of

guts! Lousy whore-headed flannel mouth! (*Into phone*) Duffy! (*To HILDY*) I'll kill 'em—both of them! I'll butter this town with their brains! (*Into phone*) Duffy! (*To the world*) Mousing around with some big blonde Annie! That's co-operation! (*Screaming into Examiner phone*) Duffy!

HILDY (*to WALTER*) Shut up, will you? (*Into phone*) You sure! Nobody?

WALTER (*a howl*) Duffy! (*Throwing the receiver to the desk*) I ought to know better than hire anybody with a disease! (*To LOUIE, panting*) Louie! It's up to you!

LOUIE (*loqually*) Anything you want, boss

WALTER Beat it out and get me hold of some guys, will you?

LOUIE Who do you want?

WALTER (*trembling*) I want anybody with hair on their chests! Get them off the streets—anywhere! Offer them anything—only get them! (*Confidentially*) Listen, Louie We got to get this desk out of here!

LOUIE (*surveys the desk calmly*) Is it important?

WALTER Is it important!?! Louie, you're the best friend I got I'd go through hell for you and I know you won't fail me Get me enough people to move it! Do you understand that? Now, beat it! And remember, I'm relying on you!

LOUIE (*departing*) You know me The shirt off my back

WALTER (*yelling after him*) Don't bump into anything! (*He locks the door*)

HILDY (*emotionally, into phone*) Calumet two one hundred

WALTER That lousy immigrant'll flop on me! I know it (*Bitterly*) Can you imagine Butch laying up with some whisker at the Revere House! At a time like this! Listen, Hildy (*Confidentially*) If Louie don't come back in five minutes, we'll get it out alone! There's millions of ways! We can start a fire and get the firemen to carry it out in the confusion!

HILDY Do anything you damn please! (*Into phone*) Ring that number, will you?

WALTER (*very excited*) We don't even have to do this! We'll get the Chicago Historical Society to claim it as an antique We can move it out in a decent normal manner ourselves! Just the two of us!

HILDY I don't give a God damn what you do!

WALTER Come on Hildy! Come here and see if we can move it!

HILDY (*into phone*) Hello! Hello! Is this the Lying-in Hospital? Did you have an auto accident in the last hour?

WALTER Will you come here?

HILDY (*into phone*) Oh, I see I beg your pardon

WALTER Right when I'm surrounded, with my back against the wall, you ain't going to lie down on me!

HILDY (*jiggling the phone hook*)
I'm going to lay down on you and
spit in your eye, you murderer!

WALTER Scared, huh? Yellow run-
ning out of your collar!

HILDY I don't care what you think!
I'm going to find my girl's mother!
(*Madly jiggling the hook*) Oh, for
God's sake!

WAITER Your girl! You and Butch
McGuirk! Woman lovers!

HILDY (*hangs up phone with a
bang*) God damn it! I'm going to
go out and find her! (*Starts for door*
*At that instant there comes a loud
knock*)

WALTER Who's that? Don't open
that!

HILDY The hell I won't! I'm going to
the morgue! To look!
(*He flings the door open. The
SHERIFF, accompanied by two Deputies—CARL and FRANK—surrounded
by MC GUE, KRUGER and MURPHY,
bar his exit*)

THE REPORTERS Oh, there he is! Say
Hildy! Wait a second, etc. (*HILDY is
struggling past them. The SHERIFF
grabs him*)

SHERIFF Just a minute, Johnson!

HILDY Let go of me! What the hell's
the idea?

THE REPORTERS What's your hurry?
We want to see you! etc

HILDY Take you! God damn paws off
me!

SHERIFF Hold him, boys!

WALTER (*to the SHERIFF*) Who the
hell do you think you are, breaking
in here like this?

SHERIFF You can't bluff me, Burns!
I don't care who you are or what
paper you're editor of!

HILDY God damn it! Let me go!
(*Hysterically*) Let me go, fellas!
Somethings happened to my girl's
mother!

SHERIFF Hang on to him!

THE REPORTERS We know what
you're up to! Going out to get Wil-
liams probably! The door was
locked! He and Mollie were talking!
They know where he is! etc

HILDY (*retreating back into the room
before HARTMAN and his deputies*)
Listen guys! I don't know anything.
I tell you! There's been an accident—
I just been calling up the hospital!
I was just going out to the morgue to
see if she was there! Now

SHERIFF Johnson, there's something
very, very peculiar going on

HILDY Listen Pinky! You can send
somebody with me if you want to! If
you don't believe me!

SHERIFF I wasn't born yesterday,
Johnson. Now the boys tell me you
and Mollie

HILDY Nobody's trying to put any-
thing over on you! Now, I'm getting
out of here and you can't stop me!

MURPHY You're not going any-
where! He's got the story sewed up,
Pete! He and his God damn boss.
That's why he's here!

WALTER (*putting*) If you've got any accusations to make, Hartman, make them in the proper manner! Otherwise I'll have to ask you to get out!

SHERIFF (*pop-eyed*) You'll ask me to *what*?

WALTER I'll ask you to get out

SHERIFF (*to his deputies*) Close that door! Don't let anybody in or out!

MURPHY Come on, Pinky! Give him a little third degree!

SHERIFF Johnson, I'm going to the bottom of this! Now then, come clean! What do you know about Williams? Are you going to talk or aren't you?

HILDY What the hell do I know about Williams?

SHERIFF All right, boys! Take him along I got ways of making him talk (*HILDY struggles*)

HILDY Look out, you

MC CUE What's the use of fighting, Hildy? (*THE REPORTERS swarm around HILDY. Shouts of "I got him!" "No, you don't!" "Hey, what you doing?" "Paste him!" "Aw, Hildy! What the hell!" etc. HILDY's voice rises out of the din.*)

HILDY Say what the hell's the idea?

THE DEPUTIES He's got a gun on him! Look out! He's got a gun! He's got a gun!

HILDY No, you don't! Hey, Walter!

WALTER What is it? Here!

SHERIFF Gimme that! (*Takes the gun*)

HILDY (*resisting*) That's mine!

MURPHY Jesse James, huh! The drug store cowboy!

MC CUE He's been going to the movies Two-gun Johnson!

KRUGER The terror of Wilson Avenue beach!

SHERIFF (*frozen, looking at the gun*) Where did you get this?

HILDY I got a right to carry a gun if I want to

SHERIFF Not *this* gun!

WALTER (*easily*) I can explain that, Hartman. He was having some trouble with the Durkin store and I gave it to him to defend himself!

SHERIFF Oh, you *did*! Well, that's very, very interesting! This happens to be the gun that Earl Williams shot his way out with!

THE REPORTERS What? What's that? etc

WALTER (*to HARTMAN*) Are you trying to make me out a liar?

SHERIFF (*wildly*) I know my own gun, don't I?

MURPHY (*bitterly to HILDY*) Getting married, huh!

KRUGER Maybe Williams was gonna be his best man

SHERIFF (*trembling*) Where is he?
Where you got him?

WALTER (*sympathetically*) You're
barking up the wrong tree, Hartman

SHERIFF I'll give you three minutes
to tell me where he is!

HILDA He went over to the hospital
to call on Professor Eglehofer!

SHERIFF What! !

HILDA With a bag of marshmal-
lows
(*The SHERIFF stands silent, a gypsy,
then streaks wildly for the toilet and
throws open the door*)

WALTER Take a magazine along

THE REPORTERS Come on, Hilda
Where is he? That's a hell of a
trick Hilda I thought we were
friends! etc

SHERIFF (*rushing back from the
toilet*) By God, I'll show you!

THE REPORTERS Look here, Pete!
What about Mr Burns? Ask the
Master Mind! Yeah What's he do-
ing over here? etc

SHERIFF (*grabbing WALTER's arm*)
Speak up, Burns! What do you know
about this?

WALTER (*gently but firmly disen-
gaging his arm*) Listen I Hartman

MURPHY 'The hell with that! Where
is he?

WALTER (*continuing*) The Ex-
aminer is not obstructing justice or
aiding criminals You ought to know
that!

CARL (*pointing to the Examiner
phone*) Look! Somebody was talk-
ing on there! The receiver is off!
(*MC CUE jumps for the phone*)

MC CUE I'll find out who it is

SHERIFF (*also jumping*) Leave that
alone! I'm in charge here!

HILDA Walter, listen! If I don't get
out of here

SHERIFF Quiet, everybody! I'll han-
dle this It may be Earl Williams

HILDA Tell him to come on over

SHERIFF Sssh! (*Into phone, swal-
lowing, then elaborately disguising
his voice*) Hello, Earl!

WALTER (*smiling*) Scotland Yard

SHERIFF (*to MC CUE, in a whisper*)
Trace this call—quick! (*MC CUE
jumps for another phone*) Yes, this
is Walter

MC CUE (*into another phone*) Trace
the call on twenty-one! In a hurry!

SHERIFF (*into Examiner phone*)
What? You gotta do what? Who is
this? ! ! !

WALTER You're talking to the Ex-
aminer, Hawkshaw!
(*The SHERIFF wheels*)

MC CUE That's right, Sheriff!

SHERIFF Johnson, you're under ar-
rest! You too, Burns!

WALTER (*calmly, without moving
from his post at the desk*) Who's un-
der arrest? Listen, you pimple-

headed German spy, do you realize what you're doing?

SHERIFF. We'll see about this. Get the Mayor, Carl! Ask him to come over here! (*As CARL goes to the telephone the door opens and MRS GRANT, disheveled, with her hat over one ear, enters with two policemen*)

FIRST POLICEMAN (*entering*)
In here, Madam?

HILDY (*leaping forward, happily*)
Mother!

MRS GRANT (*to POLICEMAN*) That man there! With the gray necktie! (*She points accusingly at WALTER*)

HILDY (*hugging her*) Mother! Oh, my God, I'm glad to see you! Are you all right? Tell me! (*MRS GRANT indignantly shakes HILDY off*)

SHERIFF What's the idea here?

POLICEMAN This lady claims she was kidnapped!

SHERIFF What?!!

MRS GRANT They dragged me all the way down the stairs—I tried to get help and they began to pinch me—I'm black and blue all over! Then they ran into another automobile and I was nearly killed!

SHERIFF Just a minute! What did this man have to do with it, lady? (*He points at WALTER*)

MRS GRANT He was the one in charge of everything! He told them to kidnap me!

WALTER (*amazed*) Are you referring to me, Madam?

MRS GRANT (*to WALTER*) You know you did! You told them to take me out of here!

SHERIFF What about this, Burns! Kidnapping, eh?

WALTER (*round-eyed*) It's beyond me Who is this woman?

MRS GRANT Oh! Oh, what a thing to say! I was standing right there after the girl jumped out of that window!

SHERIFF Did you get the Mayor? Was he in?

A DEPUTY He's coming over

WALTER (*to MRS GRANT*) Now, Madam, be honest, if you were out joy-riding—drunk! and got in some scrape why don't you admit it instead of accusing innocent people!

MRS GRANT (*beginning to doubt her senses*) You ruffian! You unprincipled man! How dare you say a thing like that!

HILDY Please, mother! He's just crazy! Don't!

MRS GRANT I'll tell you something more, officer! I'll tell you why they did it!

WALTER (*fidgeting*) Come on, Sheriff We've got to get bail

MRS GRANT (*continuing crescendo*) I was in here and they had some kind of a murderer—hiding him! (*This is a bombshell The room is electrified by the old lady's announcement*)

SHERIFF Hiding him! Hiding him!
In here?

MURPHY Hiding him where?

HILDY Mother!

THE REPORTERS Where was he?
Where did they have him? etc

WALTER (*with superb indignation*)
Madam, you're a God-damn liar!
(*To emphasize his righteousness*
WALTER pounds on the desk three
times—and then stands horrified. He
remembers, too late, the signal.)

THE REPORTERS For God's sake, tell
us where he was! Did they tell you
where? Tell us! etc

SHERIFF Shut up, everybody! Now!
Where was he? Tell me, where he
was!

MRS GRANT Well, I was sitting
right in this chair
(*Three answering knocks come from*
WILLIAMS. *The SHERIFF leaps as if*
the desk had bitten him.)

SHERIFF (*whispering*) What was
that?

THE REPORTERS My God, he's in the
desk! For the love of Christ! Holy
God, he's in there! etc

SHERIFF Aha! I thought so! Stand
back, everybody!

DEPUTY Look out, Sheriff! He may
shoot!

SHERIFF Get your guns out! (*The*
police all take out guns.)

HILDY Tie s hammies, for God's sake!

SHERIFF Don't take any chances!
Shoot through the desk!

HILDY He can't hurt anybody! You
got his gun!

MRS GRANT (*panic-stricken*) Oh,
dear! Oh, dear!

WALTER (*to MRS GRANT*) You gray-
haired old Judas!

MRS GRANT Let me out! Let me out
of here! (*Streaks for the door, exits*
THE REPORTERS *are going for the*
telephones.)

MURPHY (*into phone*) City desk!
Quick!

SHERIFF (*to POLICEMEN*) Close the
door. You stand there. You cover the
windows. (*Indicates with his gun.*)

MURPHY Look out where you're
pointing that gun, Pinky!

MC CUE (*into phone*) Gimme Emil.

KRUGER (*into phone*) Gimme the
city desk.

MURPHY Hold the wire! I've got a
flash for you.

WAITER (*to HILDY*) Call Duffy.

SHERIFF No, you don't!

WALTER Do you want us to get
scooped?

MC CUE (*into phone*) Emil? Hang
on for a second.

SHERIFF Now then! Everybody aim
right at the centre. And when I say
three—

HILLY God damn it! That's murder!

CARL Yah . .

SHERIFF Carl! Frank! One of you get on each side of the desk Take hold of the cover Now then! We got you covered, Williams—don't try to move Now! Everybody quiet and ready for any emergency I'm going to count three

MURPHY (*phoning in the silence*) I'll have it in a minute

SHERIFF One!

KRUGER Right away now!

SHERIFF Two! (*DIAMOND LOUIE enters, accompanied by three people he has picked up in the street One is a boy in short pants, the second is a sailor, the third is a scedy old man of the Trader Horn type*)

POLICEMAN (*at the door, opposing them*) What do you want? (*WALTER utters violently, LOUIE and his assistants disappear*)

SHERIFF (*whirling*) Who was that?

WALTER (*white with rage*) Double crossing Sicilian!

SHERIFF Shut up!

KRUGER (*into phone*) Keep holding it!

SHERIFF Now taen! Keep everybody out of here! I want quiet! There's a dozen guns on you, Williams! You can't escape! Do you surrender or not?

WALTER (*into phone*) Duffy!

SHERIFF Are you ready, boys?

SHERIFF All right Now everybody aim right at the centre (*Looking around*) Are you all ready? (*To the men at the desk*) You boys? (*From the DEPUTIES comes a whispered "Yes"*) Ready back there? (*This to the men at the door and windows they give quick nods in reply*) All right Now then—up with it (*CARL and FRANK raise the cover The SHERIFF waits a discreet distance until he sees there is no danger WILLIAMS is cowering in the desk, his hands over his face The SHERIFF rushes on him, jabbing his gun into him*)

WILLIAMS (*a wail*) Go on—shoot me!

SHERIFF Got you, Williams!

THE POLICE AND DEPUTIES Grab him there! That's him! That's him! Don't let him shoot! Stick 'em up you! Clout him! Give him the boots! Hold his arm! (*Through this THE REPORTERS are telephoning in As they talk, the police drag the screaming little anarchist out The SHERIFF follows them*)

MURPHY (*into phone*) Earl Williams was just captured in the press room o' the Criminal Courts Building hiding in a desk

MC CUE (*into phone*) The Sheriff just caught Williams in a roll top right here in the room

KRUGER (*into phone*) Just nabbed Williams hiding in a desk, Criminal Court press room

MC CUE (*into phone*) Williams put up a desperate struggle but the police overpowered him

134 BEN HECHT AND CHARLES MAC ARTHUR

MURPHY (*into phone*) Williams tried to shoot it out with the cops but his gun wouldn't work

KRUGER (*into phone*) Williams was unconscious when they opened the desk

WALTER (*into phone*) Duffy! The Examiner just turned Earl Williams over to the Sheriff
(*The SHERIFF rushes back*)

SHERIFF (*indicating WALTER and HILDY*) Just a minute! Put the cuffs on those two! (*The police obey*)
Harboring a fugitive from justice!

MURPHY (*into phone*) A well dressed society woman tipped off the cops. Call you back in a minute

KRUGER (*into phone*) An old sweetheart of Williams double crossed him
Call you back

MC CUE (*into phone*) More in a minute

THE REPORTERS Where's that old lady? Hey madam! Wait a minute! Where's the old dame?
(*They exit in a hurry*)

SHERIFF (*into phone*) Hello, girlie! Gimme Jacob! Quick!

WALTER Hurtman you're going to wish for the rest of your life you'd never been born!
(*The MAYOR enters*)

MAYOR Fine work, Pete! You certainly delivered the goods! I'm proud of you!

SHERIFF (*over his shoulder as he phones*) Look kind of natural, don't

they, Fred? (*Referring to the handcuffs*)

MAYOR (*happily*) A sight for sore eyes! Well, it looks like you boys stepped in something up to your neck!

HILDY (*to His Honor*) Go on! Laugh! You big tub of guts!

MAYOR That's pretty, isn't it? Aiding an escaped criminal huh?

SHERIFF (*rolling in catnip*) And a little charge of kidnapping I'm looking into! (*Into phone*) That's the jail! There must be somebody over there!

MAYOR Well! Looks like about ten years apiece for you birds

WALTER Does it? Well, whenever you think you've got the Examiner licked, that's a good time to get out of town

HILDY On a hand car

MAYOR Whistling in the dark, eh? Well, it isn't going to help you
You're through

WALTER Yeah? The last man that told me that was Barney Schmidt a week before he cut his throat

MAYOR Is that so?

WALTER And remember George T. Yorke, blowing his head off with a shot gun? We've been in worse jams than this—haven't we, Hildy? But something seems to watch over the Examiner (*He raises his eyebrows*)

HILDY Yeah. When that minister sued us—remember? False arrest

WALTER Oh, yes (Coolly to the MAYOR) The Reverend J B Godolphin sued the Examiner once for a hundred thousand dollars. It seems that we'd called him a fairy. Well, the day of the trial came and the Reverend was on his way to court.

HILDY With all his lawyers and medical witnesses

WALTER (orgiastic) Drowned by God! Drowned in the river! With their automobile, their affidavits and their God-damn law books! And I got the same feeling right now that I had five minutes before that accident!

MAYOR Your luck ain't with you now

SHERIFF (into telephone) Jacob! I caught him Williams Singlehanded. Yeah. They're bringing him right over. Notify everybody. We're going to proceed with the hanging per schedule (Wiggles telephone for another call)

WALTER (to the MAYOR) You're going to be in office for exactly two days more and then we're pulling your big nose out of the feed bag and setting you out on your fat can!

SHERIFF Give me the state's attorney's office

HILDY And when you're walking up and down North Avenue with blue eyeglasses selling lead pencils, we're not going to forget you, either!

SHERIFF (merrily) We're going to be selling lead pencils, eh?

MAYOR Don't even answer him.

THE SHERIFF Well, I'll tell you what you'll be doing. Making brooms in the state penitentiary. (Into phone) Hello, Pyrstalski? This is Hartman. Come right over to my office, will you? I've just arrested a couple of important birds. I want you to take their confessions. (Hangs up)

WALTER (seizing the Examiner phone) Duffy! Get Clarence Darrow! !!!

MAYOR Get anybody you want! All the Darrows in the world aren't going to help you!

WALTER Schmidt, Yorke, Godolphin. You're next, Fred.

MAYOR The power of the press, huh? Well, it don't scare me! Not an iota!

SHERIFF It's a big windbag! That's all it is! Take 'em along, Carl!

WALTER Bigger men than you have found out what it is! Presidents! Yes and Kings!

(PINCUS, the governor's messenger, reels in, stewed)

PINCUS (woozy) Here's your reprieve

MAYOR (seeing him, in panic) Get out of here!

PINCUS You can't bribe me!

SHERIFF Get out of here, you!

PINCUS I won't! Here's your reprieve!

HILDY What's that?

PINCUS I don't want to be City
S...ic

WALTER Who is this man?

SHERIFF (*frenzied*) Throw him out,
Frank!

HILLY (*seizing PINCUS with his free
hand*) Who was bribing you? (*WAL-
TER also seizes PINCUS, already be-
ing pulled out of shape*)

PINCUS They wouldn't take it!

MAYOR You're insane!

WAITER What did I tell you? An
unseen power What's your name?

PINCUS Irving Pincus!

MAYOR You drunken idiot! Arrest
him! The idea of coming in here with
a cock-and-bull story like that

SHERIFF It's a frameup! That's what
it is! Some imposter!

HILLY Wait a minute! (*To the
DEPUTIES*) Let go there!

WALTER Murder, huh?

HILLY Hinging an innocent man to
win an election!

SHERIFF That's a lie!

MAYOR I never saw him before in my
life!

WALTER (*to PINCUS*) When did you
deliver this first?

HILLY Who did you talk to?

PINCUS They started right in brib-
ing me!

HILLY Who's "they"?

PINCUS (*indicating the MAYOR and
SHERIFF*) Them!

MAYOR That's absurd on the face
of it, Mr Burns! He's talking like a
child!

WALTER (*really impressed*) An un-
seen power

MAYOR Certainly! He's insane or
drunk or something! Why, if this
unfortunate man Williams has really
been reprimed, I personally am
tickled to death! Aren't you, Pete?

HILLY Go on, you'd kill your mother
to get elected!

MAYOR (*shocked*) That's a hell of a
thing to say, Johnson, about any-
body! Now, look here, Walter, you're
an intelligent man

WAITER (*stopping the MAYOR*)
Just a minute (*To PINCUS*) All
right, Mr Pincus Let's have your
story

PINCUS Well, I've been married for
nineteen years

WALTER Skip all that

MAYOR (*loudly*) Take those hand-
cuffs off the boys, Pete That wasn't
at all necessary

SHERIFF (*springing to obey*) I was
just going to

MAYOR I can't tell you how badly
I feel about this, Walter There was
no excuse for Hartman flying off the
handle

SHERIFF (*busy with the handcuffs*).
I was only doing my duty There
wasn't anything personal intended

HILLY You guys had better quit politics and take in washing (*They are set free*)

MAYOR Sheriff (*He is looking over the reprieve*) This document is authentic! Earl Williams, thank God, has been reprieved, and the commonwealth of Chicago has been spared the painful necessity of shedding blood

WALTER Save that for the Tribune

MAYOR (*to PINCUS*) What did you say your name was—Pincus?

PINCUS That's right (*Shows a locket*) Here's a picture of the wife

MAYOR (*trapped*) A very fine-looking woman

PINCUS (*mysteriously angered*) She's good enough for me (*PEGGY ENTERS*)

HILLY I'll bet she is

MAYOR A real character

PEGGY Hildy, what's the matter? What are they going to do? Mother said—

HILLY (*seeing her*) Peggy, don't bowl me out now

WALTER Nobody's going to do anything to anybody

MAYOR Of course not My good friend Walter Burns and I understand each other perfectly I trust

SHERIFF (*eager*) And so do I

MAYOR So do you *what*, you God damn hoodoo! And now, Mr Pincus, if you'll come with us we'll take you

over to the Warden's office and deliver that reprieve

PEGGY But Hildy, mother said that they'd arrested you

PINCUS (*being escorted out by the MAYOR*) If I was to go home and tell my wife—

MAYOR The hell with you wife!

PINCUS (*drunkenly loyal to his mate*) She loves me (*Exit PINCUS and the MAYOR*)

SHERIFF (*pauses His eyes lower He speaks unningly*) By the way, Walter We were going to have a little feed after the hanging . a sort of buffet breakfast

MAYOR (*calling from the corridor*) Hartman!

SHERIFF (*nervously*) I'm coming, Fred (*Coyly, as WALTER stares*) What do you say we eat it now? I mm? (*Still the dead pan from WALTER*) Delicious ham and some of Mrs Hartman's own preserves

MAYOR (*loudly from the hall*) Hartman!!!

(*The SHERIFF sighs A plaintive shrug indicates that he has a great deal to contend with He leaves*)

WALTER (*dreamily*) Wait till those two Greeks read the Examiner to-morrow! (*Back to life*) Hildy, I'll tell you what I want you to do

HILLY What?

WALTER I want you to get this guy Pincus over to the office tomorrow—

HILLY Nothing doing, Walter I'm all washed up I mean it this time, Walter

PEGGY Oh, Hildy, if I only thought you did

HILLY Listen, Peggy,—if I'm not telling you the absolute truth may God strike me dead right now I'm going to New York with you to-night—if you give me this one last chance! I'll cut out drinking and swearing and everything connected with the God-damn newspaper business I won't even read a newspaper

WALTER Listen, Hildy, I got an idea

HILLY (to WALTER) There's nothing you can say can make me change my mind This time I'm through, and I mean it I know I don't deserve you, Peggy I've done everything in the world to prove that, I guess

PEGGY Hildy, please! Don't say things like that

HILLY I've gotta hell of a nerve to ask you to marry me I'm a prize package, all right But if you'll take me, here I am

PEGGY Darling, don't talk that way I want you just the way you are (Anyway PEGGY will always remember that she said this and always forget that she didn't mean it)

WALTER God, Hildy, I didn't know it was anything like this Why didn't you say something? I'd be the last person in the world to want to come between you and your happiness

HILLY (staggered) What?

WALTER You ought to know that
(As HILLY continues to blink)
I love you, you crazy Swede! (To PEGGY) You're getting a great guy, Peggy

HILLY Never mind the Valentines Goodbye, you lousy bohunk (They shake hands)

WALTER You're a great newspaperman, Hildy I'm sorry to see you go Damn sorry

HILLY Well, if I ever come back to the business (To PEGGY) Which I won't (To WALTER, his arm around PEGGY) There's only one man I'd work for You know that, don't you?

WALTER I'd kill you if you ever worked for anybody else

HILLY Hear that, Peggy? That's my diploma (He hesitates) Well, Walter I don't know what to say except I'm going to miss you like hell

WALTER Same here, son

HILLY (to PEGGY) Twelve years we've been knocking around together before you were born (To WALTER, his face lighting up) Remember the time we hid the missing heiress in the sauerkraut factory?

WALTER Do I! (To PEGGY) Get him to tell you some time about how we stole Old Lady Haggerty's stomach off the coroner's physician We proved she was poisoned

HILLY (laughing) We had to hide for a week!

PEGGY Darling . . .

HILLY (*back to life*) What?

HILLY Ah, forget it, Walter (*He, too, is leaving*)

PEGGY You don't want to go to New York down deep

HILLY Aw what do you mean? I was just talking (*With a nervous laugh*) I'd feel worse if I stayed, I guess

WALTER Hold on! I want you to have something to remember me by You can't just leave like this (*Thoughtfully reaching for his watch*) And I know what it's going to be (*Produces the watch*)

PEGGY Hildy, if I thought you were going to be unhappy—I mean, if you really wanted to— (*Firmly*) No No It's your chance to have a home and be a human being—and I'm going to make you take it

HILLY (*embarrassed*) Aw, Jesus, no, Walter! You make me feel like a fairy or something!

WALTER (*to PEGGY*) Why, I wouldn't let him stay Go on, Hildy, before I make you city editor

WALTER (*with affected brusqueness*) Shut up! You're going to take it, I tell you! It was a present from the Big Chief himself! And if you'll look in side (*Opening the watch*) You'll find a little inscription "To the Best Newspaperman I know"

HILLY (*starting*) Hurry up, Peggy He means it

When you get to New York, you can scratch out my name and put yours in its place, if you want to

WALTER (*as PEGGY follows*) Any objection to my kissing the bride?

HILLY You know I wouldn't do that

HILLY (*stopping*) It's O.K. with me (*He looks at PEGGY She smiles*) Go ahead, Mrs. Johnson

WALTER Here (*Giving him the watch*)

WALTER (*removing his hat and kissing her chastely*) Thank you What time does your train go?

HILLY Aw, Walter! It's too good for me! I can't take it!

PEGGY There's another one at twelve-forty (*To HILLY*) We came awfully near going without you

WALTER You got to! (*To PEGGY*) Make him!

WALTER New York Central, eh? (*To HILLY*) I wish there was time to get you a little wedding present but it's awful short notice

PEGGY Go on, Hildy if Mr. Burns wants you to You don't want to hurt his feelings (*HILLY takes it WALTER pats him on the shoulder, his face averted*)

PEGGY (*straining to be gone*) Thank you, Mr. Burns, but Hildy's all the wedding present I want (*Laughing a little*) If I've really got him

HILLY (*a lump in his throat*) Well, this is the first and last thing I ever got from a newspaper

PEGGY Goodbye, Mr. Burns I always had a queer opinion of you,

Mr Burns I still think you're a little peculiar, but you're all right underneath I mean I think you're a peach

WALTER (*winningly*) So are you! You look just like a little flower!

HILLY (*ushering PEGGY out*) Good-bye, you big baboon

PEGGY Goodbye (*They exit*)

WALTER (*calling after, leaning against the door*) Goodbye, Johnson! Be good to yourself and the little girl

HILLY'S VOICE The same to you and many of them!

(WALTER waits till HILLY and PEGGY are out of sight and earshot, then closes the door He walks slowly to the telephone The receiver is still off the hook, the obedient DUFFY still on the other end WALTER hesitates sentimentally, the receiver in his hand Then he heaves a huge sigh and speaks)

WALTER Duffy! (*He sounds a bit tired*) Listen I want you to send a wire to the Chief of Police of La Porte, Indiana That's right Tell him to meet the twelve-forty out of Chicago New York Central and arrest Hildy Johnson and bring him back here Wire him a full description The son of a bitch stole my watch!

CURTAIN

This epilogue is one of apology

When we applied ourselves to write a newspaper play we had in mind a piece of work which would reflect our intellectual disdain of and superiority to the Newspaper

What we finally turned out, as the reader may verify if he will, is a romantic and rather doting tale of our old friends—the reporters of Chicago

It developed in writing this play that our contempt for the institution of the Press was a bogus attitude, that we looked back on the Local Room where we had spent half our lives as a veritable fairyland—and that we were both full of a nostalgia for the bouncing days of our servitude

The same uncontrollable sentimentality operated in our treatment of Chicago which as much as any of our characters, is the hero of our play

The iniquities double dealings, chicaneries and immoralities which, as ex-Chicagoans we knew so well, returned to us in a mist called the Good Old Days, and our delight in our memories would not be denied

As a result The Front Page, despite its oaths and realisms is a Valentine thrown to the past a Ballad (to us) full of Heimweh and Love

So it remains for more stern and uncompromising intellects than ours to write of the true Significance of the Press Therefore our apology to such bombinators radicals Utopians and Schoengeistens who might read this work expecting intellectual mayhem

In writing it we found we were not so much dramatists or intellectuals as two reporters in exile

—THE AUTHORS

The Green Pastures

BY MARC CONNELLY

TO

MY MOTHER

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The Green Pastures is an attempt to present certain aspects of a living religion in the terms of its believers. The religion is that of thousands of Negroes in the deep South. With terrific spiritual hunger and the greatest humility, these untutored black Christians—many of whom cannot even read the book which is the treasure house of their faith—have adapted the contents of the Bible to the consistencies of their everyday lives.

Unburdened by the differences of more educated theologians, they accept the Old Testament as a chronicle of wonders which happened to people like themselves in vague but actual places, and of rules of conduct, true acceptance of which will lead them to a tangible, three-dimensional Heaven. In this Heaven, if one has been born in a district where fish fries are popular, the angels do have magnificent fish fries through an eternity somewhat resembling a series of earthly holidays. The Lord Jehovah will be the promised comforter, a just but compassionate patriarch, the summation of all the virtues His follower has observed in the human beings about him. The Lord may look like the Reverend Mr. Dubois, as our Sunday School teacher speculates in the play, or he may resemble another believer's own grandfather. In any event, His face will be familiar to the one who has come for his reward.

The author is indebted to Mr. Roark Bradford, whose retelling of several of the Old Testament stories in *Ol' Man Adam an' His Chillun* first stimulated his interest in this point of view.

One need not blame a hazy memory of the Bible for the failure to recall the characters of Hezdrcl, Zeba and others in the play. They are the author's apocrypha, but he believes persons much like them have figured in the meditations of some of the old Negro preachers, whose simple faith he has tried to translate into a play.

The Green Pastures was first produced at the Mansfield Theatre, New York City, by Laurence Rivers, Inc., on February 26, 1930, and closed on August 29, 1931. Following is the original cast

| | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| MR. DESHILE | Charles H. Moore |
| MYRTLE | Alicia Escamilla |
| FIRST BOY | Jazzlips Richardson, Jr. |
| SECOND BOY | Howard Washington |
| THIRD BOY | Reginald Blythwood |
| RANDOLPH | Joe Byrd |
| A COOK | Frances Smith |
| CUSTARD MAKER | Homer Tutt |
| FIRST MAMMY ANGEL | Anna Mae Fntz |
| A STOUT ANGEL | Josephine Byrd |
| A SLIM ANGEL | Edna Thrower |
| ARCHANGEL | J. A. Shipp |
| GABRIEL | Wesley Hill |
| THE LORD | Richard B. Harrison |
| CHOIR LEADER | McKinley Reeves |
| ADAM | Daniel I. Haynes |
| EVE | Inez Richardson Wilson |
| CAIN | Lou Vernon |
| CAIN'S GIRL | Dorothy Randolph |
| ZEPHRA | Edna M. Harris |
| CAIN THE SIXTH | James Fuller |
| BOY GAMBLER | Louis Kelsey |
| FIRST GAMBLER | Collington Hayes |
| SECOND GAMBLER | Ivan Sharp |
| VOICE IN SHANTY | Josephine Byrd |
| NOAH | Tutt Whitney |
| NOAH'S WIFE | Susie Sutton |
| SHEM | Milton I. Williams |
| FIRST WOMAN | Dinks Thomas |
| SECOND WOMAN | Anna Mae Fntz |
| THIRD WOMAN | Geneva Blythwood |
| FIRST MAN | Emory Richardson |

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| FLATFOOT | Freddie Archibald |
| HAM | J Homer Tutt |
| JAPIETH | Stanleigh Morrell |
| FIRST CLEANER | Josephine Byrd |
| SECOND CLEANER | Florence Fields |
| ABRAHAM | J A Shipp |
| ISAAC | Charles H Moore |
| JACOB | Edgar Burks |
| MOSES | Alonzo Fenderson |
| ZIPPORAH | Mercedes Gilbert |
| AARON | McKinley Reeves |
| A CANDIDATE MAGICIAN | Reginald Fenderson |
| PHARAOH | George Randol |
| THE GENERAL | Walt McClane |
| FIRST WIZARD | Emory Richardson |
| HEAD MAGICIAN | Arthur Porter |
| JOSHUA | Stanleigh Morrell |
| FIRST SCOUT | Ivan Sharp |
| MASTER OF CEREMONIES | Billy Cumby |
| KING OF BABYLON | Jay Mondaaye |
| PROPHET | Ivan Sharp |
| HIGH PRIEST | J Homer Tutt |
| THE KING'S FAVORITES | Leona Winkler, Florence Lee, Constance Van Dyke, Mary Ella Hart, Inez Persand |
| OFFICER | Emory Richardson |
| HEZDREL | Daniel L Haynes |
| ANOTHER OFFICER | Stanleigh Morrell |

Production designed by Robert Edmond Jones

Music under the direction of Hall Johnson

Staged by Marc Connelly

SCENES

PART ONE

SCENE I
The Sunday School

SCENE II
A Fish Fry

SCENE III
A Garden

SCENE IV
Outside the Garden

SCENE V
A Roadside

SCENE VI
A Private Office

SCENE VII
Another Roadside and a House

SCENE VIII
A House

SCENE IX
A Hillside

SCENE I
A Mountain Top

PART TWO

SCENE I
The Private Office

SCENE II
The Mouth of a Cave

SCENE III
A Throne Room

SCENE IV
The Foot of a Mountain

SCENE V
A Cabaret

SCENE VI
The Private Office

SCENE VII
Outside a Temple

SCENE VIII
Another Fish Fry

THE GREEN PASTURES

PART ONE

SCENE I

A corner in a Negro church

Ten children and an elderly preacher

The costumes are those that might be seen in any lower Louisiana town at Sunday-School time. As the curtain rises, MR. DESHEE, the preacher, is reading from a Bible. The CHILDREN are listening with varied degrees of interest. Three or four are wide-eyed in their attention. Two or three are obviously puzzled, but interested, and the smallest ones are engaged in more physical concerns. One is playing with a little doll, and another runs his finger on all the angles of his chair.

DESHEE "An' Adam lived a hundred and thirty years, an' begat a son in his own likeness, after his image, an' called his name Seth. An' de days of Adam, after he had begotten Seth, were eight hundred years, an' he begat sons an' daughters, an' all de days dat Adam lived were nine hundred an' thirty years. An' he died. An' Seth lived a hundred an' five years an' begat Enos, an' Seth lived after he begat Enos eight hundred an' seven years and begat sons and daughters. An' all de days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years, an' he died." An' it go on like dat till we come to Enoch an' de book say "An' Enoch lived sixty an' five years and begat Methuselah." Den it say "An' all de days of Methuselah were nine hundred an' sixty an' nine years an' he died." An' dat was de oldest man dat ever was. Dat's why we call ol' Mr. Gurney's mammy ol' Mrs. Methuselah, caize she's so ol'. Den a little later it tell about another member of de fam'ly. His name was Noah. Maybe some of you know about him already. I'm gonter tell you all about him next Sunday.

Anyway dat's de meat an' substance of de first five chapters of Genesis. Now, how you think you gonter like de Bible?

MYRTLE I think it's jest wonderful, Mr. Deshee. I can't understand any of it.

FIRST BOY Why did dey live so long, Mr. Deshee?

DESHEE Why? Caize dat was de way God felt.

SECOND BOY Dat made Adam a way back.

DESHEE Yes, he certainly 'way back by de time Noah come along. Want to ask me any mo' questions?

SECOND BOY What de worl' look like when de Lawd begin, Mr. Deshee?

DESHEE How yo' mean what it look like?

MYRTLE Carlisle mean who was in N'Orleans den.

DESHEE Dey wasn't nobody in N'Orleans on 'count dey wasn't any N'Orleans. Dat's de whole idea I tol' you at de end of de first Chapter. Yo' got to git yo' minds fixed. Dey wasn't any Rampart Street. Dey wasn't any Canal Street. Dey wasn't any Louisiana. Dey wasn't nothin' on de earth at all caize lo' de reason dey wasn't any earth.

MYRTLE Yes, but what Carlisle want know is—

DESHEE (*interrupting and addressing little boy who has been playing with his chair and paying no attention*) Now Randolph, if you don't listen, how yo' gonter grow up and be a good man? Yo' wantter grow up in' be a transgressor?

LITTLE BOY (*frightened*) No.

DISHEE You tell yo' mammy yo' sistert got to come wid you next time. She kin git de things done in time to bring you to de school. You content yo'self. (*The LITTLE BOY straightens up in his chair*) Now, what do Carlisle want to know?

CARLISLE How he decide he want de worl' to be right yere and how he git de idea he wanted it?

MYRTLE Caize de Book say, don't it, Mr. Deshee?

DESHEE De Book say, but at de same time dat's a good question. I remember when I was a little boy de same thing recurred to me. An ol' Mr. Dubois, he was a wonderful preacher at New Hope Chapel over in East Gretna, he said "De answer is dat de Book ain't got time to go into all de details." And he was right. You know sometimes I think de Lawd

expects us to figure out a few things for ourselves. We know that at one time dey wasn't anything except Heaven, we don't know jest where it was but we know it was dere. Maybe it was everywhere. Den one day de Lawd got the idea he'd like to make some places. He made de sun and de moon, de stars. An' he made de earth.

MYRTLE Who was aroun' den, nothin' but angels?

DESHEE I suppose so.

FIRST BOY What was de angels doin' up dere?

DESHEE I suppose dey jest flew aroun' and had a good time. Dey wasn't no sin, so dey musta had a good time.

FIRST BOY Did dey have picnics?

DESHEE Sho, dey had de nicest kind of picnics. Dey probably had fish fries, wid b'iled custard and ten cent segars for de adults. God gives us hum ins lotsa ideas about havin' good times. Maybe dey were things he'd seen de angels do. Yes sir, I bet dey had a fish fry every week.

MYRTLE Did dey have Sunday School, too?

DESHEE Yes, dey musta had Sunday School for de cherubs.

MYRTLE What did God look like, Mr. Deshee?

DESHEE Well, nobody knows exactly what God looked like. But when I was a little boy I used to imagine dat he looked like de Reverend Du-

bois He was de finest lookin' ol' man I ever knew Yes, I used to bet de Lawd looked exactly like Mr Du-bois in de days when he walked de earth in de shape of a natchel man

before I let you go I wan' you to go over wid me de main facts of de first lesson What's de name of de book?

CHILDREN Genesis

MYRTLE When was dat, Mr Deshee?

DESHEE Dat's right And what's de other name?

DESHEE Why, when he was gettin' things started down heah When He talked to Adam and Eve and Noah and Moses and all dem He made mighty men in dem days But aldo dey was awful mighty dey always knew dat He was beyond dem all Pretty ncar one o'clock, time fo' you chullun to go home to dinner, but

CHILDREN First Book of Moses

DESHEE Dat's right And dis yere's Chapter One (*The lights begin to dim*) "In de beginnin' God created de heaven an' de earth An' de earth was widout form an' void An' de darkness was upon de face of de deep"

SCENE II

In the darkness many voices are heard singing "Rise, Shine, Give God The Glory" They sing it gaily and rapidly The lights go up as the second verse ends The chorus is being sung dimmundo by a mixed company of angels That is they are angels in that they wear brightly colored robes and have wings protruding from their backs Otherwise they look and act like a company of happy Negroes at a fish fry The scene itself is a pre-Creation Heaven with compromises In the distance is an unbroken stretch of blue sky Companionable varicolored clouds billow down to the floor of the stage and roll overhead to the branches of a live oak tree which is up left The tree is leafy and dripping with Spanish moss, and with the clouds makes a frame for the scene In the cool shade of the tree are the usual appurtenances of a fish fry a large kettle of hot fat set on two small parallel logs, with a fire going underneath, and a large rustic table formed by driving four stakes into the ground and placing planks on top of the small connecting boards On the table are piles of biscuits and corn bread and the cooked fish in dishpans There are one or two fairly large cedar or crock "churns" containing boiled custard, which looks like milk There is a gourd dipper beside the churns and several glasses and cups of various sizes and shapes from which the custard is drunk

The principal singers are marching two by two in a small area at the right of the stage Two MAMMY ANGELS are attending to the frying beside the kettle Behind the table a MAN ANGEL is skinning fish and passing them to the cooks Another is ladling out the custard A MAMMY ANGEL is putting fish on bread for a brood of cherubs and during the first scene they seat themselves on a grassy bank upstage Another MAMMY ANGEL is clapping her

hands disapprovingly and beckoning a laughing BOY CHERUB down from a cloud a little out of her reach. Another MAMMY ANGEL is solicitously slapping the back of a girl cherub who has a large fish sandwich in her hand and a bone in her throat. There is much movement about the table, and during the first few minutes several individuals go up to the table to help themselves to the food and drink. Many of the women angels wear hats and a few of the men are smoking cigars. A large boxful is on the table. There is much laughter and chatter as the music softens, but continues, during the early part of the action. The following short scenes are played almost simultaneously.

FIRST COOK (at kettle, calling off)
Hurry up, Catey. Dis yere fat's cry
in fo' mo' feesh.

A VOICE (off stage) We comin', fas'
we kin. Dey got to be ketch'd, ain't
dey? We can't say, "C'm'on, little
fish. C'm'on an' git fried," kin we?

SECOND COOK (at table) De trouble
is de mens is all worm fishin'.

FIRST MAN ANGEL (at table) Whut
dif'rence do it make? Yo' all de time
got to make out like somebody's doin'
somethin' de wrong way.

SECOND COOK (near table) I s'pose
you got de perfec' way fo' makin'
bait.

FIRST MAN ANGEL I ain't sayin' dat
I is savin' what's wrong wid worm
fishin'.

SECOND COOK Whut's wrong wid
worm fishin'? Ever'thing, dat's all.
Dey's only one good way fo' cat-
fishin', an' dat's minny fishin'. Any-
body know dat.

FIRST MAN ANGEL Well, it jest so
happen dat minny fishin' is de dog-
gondest fool way of fishin'. Dey is
You kin try minny fishin' 'til de cows
come home an' all you catch'll be de
backache. De trouble wid you, sister,

is you jest got minny fishin' on de
brain.

SECOND COOK Go right on, loud
mouf. You tell me de news. My, my!
You jest de wisest person in de worl'.
First you, den de Lawd God.

FIRST MAN ANGEL (to the custard
ladler) You can't tell dem nothin'.
(Walks away to the custard churn.)
Does you try to 'splain some simple
fac' dey git man-deaf.

FIRST MAMMY ANGEL (to CHERUB
on the cloud) Now, you heerd me.
(The CHERUB assumes several mock-
ing poses, as she speaks.) You fly
down yere. You wanten be put down
in de sin book? (She goes to the ta-
ble, gets a drink for herself and points
out the CHERUB to one of the men
behind the table.) Dat baby must
got imp blood in him he so vexin'.
(She returns to her position under
the cloud.) You want me to fly up
dere an' slap you down? Now, I tol'
you (The CHERUB starts to come
down.)

STOUT ANGEL (to the CHERUB with
a bone in her throat) I tol' you you
was too little fo' catfish. What you
wanten git a bone in yo' froat fo'?
(She slaps the CHERUB's back.)

SLENDER ANGEL (leisurely eating a
sandwich as she watches the back

slapping) What de trouble wid Leo-
netta?

STOUT ANGEL She got a catfish bone
down her froat (*To the CHERUB*)
Doggone, I tol' you to eat grnnel
instead

SLENDER ANGEL Ef'n she do git all
dat et, she gonter have de bellyache

STOUT ANGEL Ain't I tol' her dat?
(*To CHERUB*) Come on now, let go
dat bone (*She slaps CHERUB's back*
again *The bone is dislodged and the*
CHERUB grins her relief) Dat's good

SLENDER ANGEL (*comfortingly*)
Now she all right

STOUT ANGEL Go on an' play wid
yo' cousins (*The CHERUB joins the*
CHERUBS sitting on the embank-
ment *The concurrency of scenes*
ends here) I ain't see you lately, Lily
How you been?

SLENDER ANGEL Mc, I'm fine I
been visitin' my mammy She waitin'
on de welcome table over by de
throne of grace

STOUT ANGEL She always was pret-
ty holy

SLENDER ANGEL Yes, ma'am She
like it dere I guess de Lawd's took
quite a fancy to her

STOUT ANGEL Well dat's natural
I declare vo' mammy one of de finest
lady angels I know

SLENDER ANGEL She claim you de
best one she know

STOUT ANGEL Well, when you come
right down to it, I suppose we is all
pretty near perfec'

SLENDER ANGEL Yes, ma'am Why
is dat, Mis' Jenny?

STOUT ANGEL I s'pose it's caize de
Lawd he don' 'low us 'sociatin' wid
de devil any mo' so dat dey can' be
no mo' sinnin'

SLENDER ANGEL Po' ol' Satan
Whutevah become of him?

STOUT ANGEL De Lawd put him
some place I s'pose

SLENDER ANGEL But dey ain't any
place but Heaven, is dey?

STOUT ANGEL De Lawd could make
a place, couldn't he?

SLENDER ANGEL Dat's de truth
Dey's one thing confuses me though

STOUT ANGEL What's dat?

SLENDER ANGEL I do a great deal of
travelin' an' I ain't never come
across any place but Heaven any
where So if de Lawd kick Satan out
of Heaven jest whcreat did he go?
Dat's my question

STOUT ANGEL You bettah let de
Lawd keep his own secrets, Lily De
way things is goin' now dey ain't
been no sinnin' since dey give dat
scamp a kick in de pants Nowadays
Heaven's free of sin an' if a lady
wants a little constitutional she kin
fly till she wing-weary widout gittin'
insulted

SLENDER ANGEL I was jest a baby
when Satan lef' I don't even 'mem-
ber what he look like

STOUT ANGEL He was jest right fo
a devil (*An ARCHANGEL enters* *He*
is older than the others and wears a

white beard His clothing is much darker than that of the others and his wings a trifle more imposing)
 Good mo'nin', Archangel
(Others say good morning)

ARCHANGEL Good mo'nin', folks I wonder kin I interrup' de fish fry an' give out de Sunday-school cyards? *(Cries of "Suttingly!" "Mah goodness, yes"—etc The marching CHOIR stops)* You kin keep singin' if you want to Why don' you sing "When de Saints Come Marchin' In?" Seem to me I ain' heard dat latly *(The CHOIR begins "When the Saints Come Marching In," rather softly, but does not resume marching The ARCHANGEL looks off left)* All right, bring 'em yere *(A prim-looking WOMAN TEACHER-ANGEL enters, shepherding ten BOY and GIRL CHERUBS The TEACHER carries ten heribboned diplomas, which she gives to the ARCHANGEL The CHERUBS are dressed in stiffly starched white suits and dresses, the little girls having enormous ribbons at the backs of their dresses and smaller ones in their hair and on the tips of their wings They line up in front of the ARCHANGEL and receive the attention of the rest of the company The CHOIR sings through the ceremony)* Now, den, cherubs, why is you yere?

CHILDREN Because we so good

ARCHANGEL Dat's right Now who de big boss?

CHILDREN Our dear Lawd

ARCHANGEL Dat's right When you all grow up what you gonter be?

CHILDREN Holy angels at de throne of grace.

ARCHANGEL Dat's right Now, you passed yo' 'xaminations and it gives me great pleasur to hand out de cyards for de whole class Gineeva Chaproc *(The FIRST GIRL CHERUB goes to him and gets her diploma The CHOIR sings loudly and resumes marching, as the ARCHANGEL calls out another name—and presents diplomas)* Corey Moulter *(SECOND GIRL CHERUB gets her diploma)* Nootzie Wincbush *(THIRD GIRL CHERUB)* Hamiet Prancy *(FOURTH GIRL CHERUB)* I guess you is Brozain Stew't *(He gives the FIFTH GIRL CHERUB the paper Each of the presentations has been accompanied by hand-clapping from the bystanders)* Now you boys know yo' own names Suppose you come yere and help me git dese 'sorted right? *(BOY CHERUBS gather about him and receive their diplomas The little GIRLS have scattered about the stage, joining groups of the adult angels The angel GABRIEL enters He is bigger and more elaborately winged than even the ARCHANGEL, but he is also much younger and beardless His costume is less conventional than that of the other men, resembling more the Gabriel of the Doré drawings His appearance causes a flutter among the others They stop their chattering with the children The CHOIR stops as three or four audible whispers of "Gabriel" are heard In a moment the heavenly company is all attention)*

GABRIEL *(Lifting his hand)* Gangway! Gangway for de Lawd God Jehovah!

(There is a reverent hush as GOD enters He is the tallest and biggest of them all He wears a white shirt with a white bow tie, a long Prince Albert coat of black alpaca, black trousers and congress garters He

looks at the assemblage There is a pause He speaks in a rich, bass voice)

GOD Is you been baptized?

OTHERS (*chanting*) Certainly, Lawd

GOD Is you been baptized?

OTHERS Certainly, Lawd

GOD (*with the beginning of musical notation*) Is you been baptized?

OTHERS (*now half singing*) Certainly, Lawd Certainly, certainly, certainly, Lawd (*They sing the last two verses with equivalent part division*)

Is you been redeemed?

Certainly, Lawd

Is you been redeemed?

Certainly, Lawd

Is you been redeemed?

Certainly, Lawd Certainly, certainly, certainly, Lawd

Do you bow mighty low?

Certainly, Lawd

Do you bow mighty low?

Certainly, Lawd

Do you bow mighty low?

Certainly, Lawd Certainly, certainly, certainly, Lawd

(*As the last response ends all heads are bowed GOD looks at them for a moment, then lifts His hand*)

GOD Let de fish fry proceed

(*EVERYONE rises The ANGELS relax and resume their maudible conversations The activity behind the table and about the cauldron is resumed Some of the CHOIR members cross to the table and get sandwiches and*

cups of the boiled custard Three or four of the CHILDREN in the Sunday School class and the LITTLE GIRL who had the bone in her throat affectionately group themselves about GOD as he speaks with the ARCH-ANGEL He pats their heads, they hang to his coat-tails, etc)

ARCHANGEL Good mo'nin', Lawd

GOD Good mo'nin', Deacon You lookin' pretty spry

ARCHANGEL I cain' complain We jest been givin' our cyards to de chil-lun

GOD Dat's good

(*A small CHERUB, his feet braced against one of GOD's shoes, is using GOD's coat tail as a trapeze One of the COOKS offers a fish sandwich which GOD politely declines*)

FIRST MAMMY ANGEL Now, you leave go de Lawd's coat, Herman You heah me?

GOD Dat's all right, sister He jest playin'

FIRST MAMMY ANGEL He playin' too rough

(*GOD picks up the CHERUB and spansks him good-naturedly The CHERUB squeals with delight and runs to his mother GABRIEL advances to GOD with a glass of the custard*)

GABRIEL Little b'iled custud, Lawd?

GOD Thank you very kindly Dis looks nice

CUSTARD MAKER (*offering a box*) Ten cent seegar, Lawd?

GOD (*taking it*) Thank you, thank you How de fish fry goin'? (*Ad lib cries of "O K Lawd," "Fine an' dandy, Lawd," "De best one yit, Lawd," etc To the choir*) How you shouters gittin' on?

CHOIR LEADER We been marchin' and singin' de whole mo'nin'

GOD I heerd you You gettin' better all de time You gittin' as good as de one at de throne Why don' you give us one dem ol' time jump-ups?

CHOIR LEADER Anythin' you say, Lawd (*To the others*) "So High!" (*The choir begins to sing "So High You Can't Get Over It" They sing softly, but do not march* An ANGEL offers his cigar to GOD from which He can light His own)

GOD No, thanks I'm gonter save dis a bit (*He puts the cigar in his pocket and listens to the singers a moment Then he sips his custard After a second sip, a look of displeasure comes on his face*)

GABRIEL What's de matter, Lawd?

GOD (*sipping again*) I ain't jest sure, yit Dey's somethin' 'bout dis custard (*Takes another sip*)

CUSTARD MAKER Ain't it all right, Lawd?

GOD It don't seem seasoned jest right You make it?

CUSTARD MAKER Yes, Lawd I put everythin' in it like I allus do It's supposed to be perfec'

GOD Yeah I kin taste de eggs and de cream and de sugar (*Suddenly*) I

know what it is It needs jest a little bit mo' firmament

CUSTARD MAKER Dey's firmament in it, Lawd

GOD Maybe, but it ain' enough

CUSTARD MAKER It's all we had, Lawd Dey ain't a drap in de jug

GOD Dat's all right I'll jest r'ar back an' pass a miracle (*Choir stops singing*) Let it be some firmament! An' when I say let it be some firmament, I don't want jest a little bitty dab o' firmament caize I'm sick an' tired of runnin' out of it when we need it Let it be a whole mess of firmament! (*The stage has become misty until GOD and the heavenly company are obscured As he finishes the speech there is a burst of thunder As the stage grows darker*) Dat's de way I like it (*Murmurs from the others "Dat's a lot of firmament" "My, dat is firmament!" "Look to me like he's created rain," etc*)

FIRST MAMMY ANGEL (*when the stage is dark*) Now, look Lawd, dat's too much firmament De cherubs is gettin' all wet

SECOND MAMMY ANGEL Look at my Carlotta, Lawd She's soaked to de skin Dat's plenty too much firmament

GOD Well, 'co'se we don't want de chillun to ketch cold Can't you dreem it off?

GABRIEL Dey's no place to dreem it, Lawd

FIRST MAMMY ANGEL Why don't we jest take de babies home, Lawd?

GOD No, I don' wanta bust up de fish fry You angels keep quiet an' I'll pass another miracle Dat's always de trouble wid miracles When you pass one you always gotta r'ar back an' pass another (There is a hush) Let dere be a place to dreen off dis firmament Let dere be mountains an' valleys an' let dere be oceans an' lakes An' let dere be rivers an' bayous to dreen it off in, too As a matter of fac' let dere be de earth An' when dat's done let dere be de sun, an' let it come out an' drv my cherubs' wings

(The lights go up until the stage is bathed in sunlight On the embankment upstage there is now a waist-high wrought-iron railing such as one sees on the galleries of houses in the French quarter of New Orleans The cherubs are being examined by their parents and there is an ad lib murmur of, "You all right, honey?" "You feel better now, Albert?" "Now you all dry, Vangy?" until the ARCH-ANGEL, who has been gazing in awe at the railing, drowns them out)

ARCHANGEL Look yere!

(There is a rush to the embankment accompanied by exclamations, "My goodness!" "What's dis?" "I declah!" etc GABRIEL towers above the group on the middle of the embankment GOD is wrapped in thought, facing the audience The CHOIR resumes singing "So High You Can't Get Over It" softly The babbling at the balustrade dies away as the people lean over the railing GABRIEL turns and faces GOD indicating the earth below the railing with his left hand)

GABRIEL Do you see it, Lawd?

GOD (quietly, without turning his head upstage) Yes, Gabriel

GABRIEL Looks mighty nice, Lawd

GOD Yes

(GABRIEL turns and looks over the railing)

GABRIEL (gazing down) Yes, suh Dat'd make mighty nice farming country Jest look at dat South forty over dere You ain't going to let dat go to waste, is you, Lawd? Dat would be a pity an' a shame

GOD (not turning) It's a good earth (GOD turns, room is made for him beside GABRIEL on the embankment) Yes I ought to have somebody to enjoy it (He turns, facing the audience The others, save for the choir who are lined up in two rows of six on an angle up right, continue to look over the embankment) Gabriel! (GOD steps down from the embankment two paces)

GABRIEL (joining him) Yes, Lawd

GOD Gabriel, I'm goin' down dere

CARRIFT Yes, Lawd

GOD I want you to be my working boss yere while I'm gone

GABRIEL Yes, Lawd

GOD You know dat matter of dem two stars?

CABRIEL Yes, Lawd

GOD Git dat fixed up! You know dat sparrow dat fell a little while ago? 'Tend to dat, too

CABRIEL Yes, Lawd

GOD I guess dat's about all I'll be back Saddy (To the CHOIR) Quiet,

angels (*The CHOIR stops singing Those on the embankment circle down stage GOD goes to embankment Turns and faces the company*)
 I'm gonter pass one more miracle
 You all gonter help me an' not make
 a soun' caize it's one of de most im-
 po'tant miracles of all (*Nobody*

moves GOD *turns, facing the sky and raises his arms above his head*) Let there be man

(*There is growing roll of thunder as stage grows dark The CHOIR bursts into "Hallelujah," and continues until the lights go up on the next scene*)

SCENE III

Enclosing the stage is a heterogeneous cluster of cottonwood, camphor, live oak and sycamore trees, yaupon and turkey-berry bushes, with their purple and red berries, sprays of fern-like indigo fier and splashes of various Louisiana flowers In the middle of the stage, disclosed when the mistiness at rise grows into warm sunlight, stands ADAM He is a puzzled man of 30, of medium height, dressed in the clothing of the average field hand He is bare-headed In the distance can be heard the choir continuing "Bright Mansions Above" A bird begins to sing ADAM smiles and turns to look at the source of this novel sound He senses his strength and raises his forearms, his fists clenched With his left hand he carefully touches the muscles of his upper right arm He smiles again, realizing his power He looks at his feet which are stretched wide apart He stamps once or twice and now almost laughs in his enjoyment Other birds begin trilling and ADAM glances up joyfully toward the foliage GOD enters

GOD Good mo'nin', Son

ADAM (*with a little awe*) Good mo'nin', Lawd

GOD What's yo' name, Son?

ADAM Adam

GOD Adam which?

ADAM (*frankly, after a moment's puzzled groping*) Jest Adam, Lawd

GOD Well, Adam, how dey treatin' you? How things goin'?

ADAM Well, Lawd, you know it's kind of a new line of wukk

GOD You'll soon get de hang of it You know yo' kind of a new style with me

ADAM Oh, I guess I'm gonter make out all right soon as I learn de ropes

GOD Yes, I guess you will Yo' a nice job

ADAM Yes, Lawd

GOD Dey's jest one little thing de matter with you Did you notice it?

ADAM Well now you mentioned it, Lawd, I kind of thought dey was somethin' wrong

GOD Yes sub, you ain't quite right Adam, you need a family De reason for dat is in yo' heart you is a family man (*Flicking the ash off his cigar*) I'd say dat was de main trouble at de moment

ADAM (*smiling*) Yes sir (*His smile fades and he is puzzled again*) At de same time—dey's one thing puzzlin' me Lawd Could I ask you a question?

GOD Why, certainly, Adam

ADAM Lawd, jest what is a family?

GOD I'm gonter show you (*Indicates a spot*) Jest lie down dere, Adam Make out you was goin' to slumber

ADAM (*gently*) Ycs, Lawd (*He lies down GOD stands beside him and as he raises his arms above his head the lights go down In the darkness GOD speaks*)

GOD Eve (*Lights go up EVE is standing beside ADAM She is about twenty-six, and quite pretty She is dressed like a country girl Heringham dress is quite new and clean* GOD is now at the other side of the stage, looking at them critically EVE looks at ADAM in timid wonder and slowly turns her head until she meets the glance of GOD ADAM stands beside EVE They gaze at each other for a moment GOD smiles) Now you all right, Eve (ADAM and EVE face him) Now I'll tell you what I'm gonter do I'm gonter put you in charge here I'm gonter give you de run of dis whole garden Eve, you take care of dis man an' Adam you take care of dis woman You belong to each other I don' want you to try to do too much caize yo' both kind

of experiment wid me an I ain't sho' whether you could make it You two jest enjoy yo'self Drink de water from de little brooks an' de wine from de grapes an' de berries, an' eat de food dat's hangin' for you in de trees (*He pauses, startled by a painful thought*) Dat is, in all but one tree (*He pauses Then, not looking at them*) You know what I mean, my children?

ADAM and EVE Yes, Lawd (*They slowly turn their heads left, toward the branches of an off-stage tree Then they look back at GOD*)

ADAM Thank you, Lawd

EVE Thank you, Lawd

GOD I gotter be gittin' along now I got a hund'ed thousan' things to do 'fo' you take you' nex' breath Enjoy yo'selves— (GOD exits) (ADAM and EVE stand looking after Him for a moment, then each looks down and watches their hands meet and clasp After a moment they lift their heads slowly until they are again gazing at the tree)

EVE Adam

ADAM (*looking at the tree, almost in terror*) What?

EVE (*softly as she too continues to look at the tree*) Adam (*The CHOIR begins singing "Turn You Round" and as the lights go down the CHOIR continues until there is blackness The CHOIR suddenly stops The following scene is played in the darkness*)

MR DESHEE'S VOICE Now, I s'pose you chillun know what happened

after God made Adam 'n' Eve Do
you?

FIRST GIRL'S VOICE Oh, yes, sub,
dey have Cain 'n' Abel

FIRST GIRL'S VOICE I know, Mr
Deshee

MR DESHEE'S VOICE Dat's right, dey
have Cain an' Abel

MR DESHEE'S VOICE Jest a minute,
Randolph Didn't I tell you you got-
ta tell yo' mammy let yo' sister bring
you Carlisle, take way dat truck he's
eatin' You sit by him, see kin you
keep him quiet Now, den, Myrtle,
what happened?

BOY'S VOICE Dat was a long time
after dey got marned, wasn't it, Mr
Deshee? My mammy say it was a
hund'ed years

FIRST GIRL'S VOICE Why, den dey
ate de fo'bidden fruit and den dey
got driv' out de garden

MR DESHEE'S VOICE An' den what
happened?

FIRST GIRL'S VOICE Den dey felt ver'
bad

MR DESHEE'S VOICE I don' mean
how dey feel, I mean how dey do
Do dey have any children or any-
thing like dat?

MR DESHEE'S VOICE Well, nobody
kin be so sure As I tol' you befo' dey
was jest beginnin' to be able to tell
de time an' nobody was any too sure
'bout anythin' even den So de bes'
thing to do is jest realize dat de thing
happened an' don't bother 'bout
how many years it was Jest remem-
ber what I told you about it gittin'
dark when you go to sleep an' it bein'
light when you wake up Dat's de
way time went by in dem days One
thing we do know an' dat was dis
boy Cain was a mean rascal

(The lights go up on the next scene)

SCENE IV

A roadside

CAIN, a husky young Negro, stands over the body of the dead ABEL Both
are dressed as laborers CAIN is looking at the body in awe, a rock in his right
hand GOD enters

GOD Cain, look what you done to
Abel

CAIN Lawd, I was min'in' my own
business and he come monkevin'
aroun' wit' me I was wukkin' in de
fiel' an' he was sittin' in de shade of
de tree He say "Me, I'd be skeered
to git out in dis hot sun I be 'fraid

my brains git cooked Co'se you ain't
got no brains so you ain't in no dan-
ger" An' so I up and flang de rock
If it miss 'im all right, an' if it hit
'im, all right Dat's de way I feel

GOD All right, but I'm yere to tell
you dat's called a crime When de
new ludge is done talkin' to you

you'll be draggin' a ball and chain de rest of yo' life

CAIN Well, what'd he want to come monkeyin' aroun' me fo' den? I was jest plowin', min'in' my own business, and not payin' him no min', and yere he come makin' me de fool I'd bust anybody what make me de fool

GOD Well, I ain't savin' you right an' I ain't sayin' you wrong But I do say was I you I'd jest git myself down de road 'til I was clean out of de county An' you better take an' git married an' settle down an' raise

some chillun Dey ain't nothin' to make a man fo'git his troubles like raisin' a family Now, you better git

CAIN Yessuh (CAIN walks off)
(GOD watches him from the forestage and as the lights begin to dim looks off The CHOIR begins "Run, Sinner, Run")

GOD Adam an' Eve, you better try aguin You better have Seth an' a lot mo' chillun
(There is darkness The CHOIR continues until the lights go up on the next scene)

SCENE V

CAIN is discovered walking on an unseen treadmill A middle distance of trees, hillsides and shrubbery passes him on an upper treadmill Behind is the blue sky He stops under the branches of a tree to look at a sign on a fence railing Only half the tree is visible on the stage The sign reads, "NOD PARISH, COUNTY LINE"

CAIN (sitting down with a sigh of relief under the tree) At dis! Phew! (Wipes his forehead with a handkerchief) Feels like I been walkin' fo'ty years (He looks back) Well, dey cain' git me now Now I kin raise a fam'ly (An idea occurs to him, and suddenly he begins looking right and left) Well, I'll be hit by a mule! Knock me down for a trustin' baby! Where I gont'er git dat fam'ly? Dat preacher fooled me (He is quite dejected) Doggone!

CAIN'S GIRL (off-stage) Hello, Country Boy!
(CAIN glances up to the off-stage branches of the tree)

CAIN Hey-ho, Good lookin'! Which way is it to town?

CAIN'S GIRL (off-stage) What you tryin' to do? You tryin' to mash me? I be doggone if it ain't gittin' so a gal cain't hardly leave de house 'out some of dese fast men ain' passin' remarks at her

CAIN I ain' passin' remarks

CAIN'S GIRL (off-stage) If I thought you was tryin' to mash me, I'd call de police an' git you tooken to de first precinct

CAIN Look yere, gal, I ast you a question, an' if you don' answer me

I'm gonter bend you cross my pants
an' burn you up

CAIN'S GIRL (*off-stage*) I'm comin'
down
(CAIN *takes his eyes from the tree*)

CAIN Yes, in' you better hurry
(CAIN'S GIRL *enters* She is as large
as CAIN, wickedly pretty and some-
what flashily dressed She smiles at
CAIN)

CAIN'S GIRL I bet you kin handle a
gal mean wid dem big stout arms of
your'n I sho' would hate to git you
mad at me, Country Boy

CAIN (*smiling*) Come yere (*She
goes a little closer to him*) Don't be
'fraid, I ain' so mean

CAIN'S GIRL You got two bad-lookin'
eyes I bet yo' hot coffee 'mong de
women folks

CAIN I ain' never find out What
was you doin' in dat tree?

CAIN'S GIRL Jest coolin' myself in de
element

CAIN Is you a Nod Parish gal?

CAIN'S GIRL Bo'n an' bred

CAIN You know yo' kinda pretty

CAIN'S GIRL Who tol' you dat?

CAIN Dese yere two bad eyes of
mine

CAIN'S GIRL I bet you say dat to
everybody all de way down de road

CAIN Comin' down dat road I didn't
talk to nobody

CAIN'S GIRL Where you boun' *fer*,
Beautiful?

CAIN I'm jest seein' de country I
thought I might settle down vere fo'
a spell You live wit' yo' people?

CAIN'S GIRL Co'se I does

CAIN S'pose dey'd like to take in a
boarder?

CAIN'S GIRL Be nice if dey would,
wouldn't it?

CAIN I think so You got a beau?

CAIN'S GIRL I uh-uh!

CAIN (*smiling*) You has now

CAIN'S GIRL I guess—I guess if you
wanted to kiss me an' I tried to stop
you, you could pretty nearly crush
me wit' dem stout arms

CAIN You wouldn't try too much,
would you?

CAIN'S GIRL Maybe for a little while

CAIN An' den what?

CAIN'S GIRL Why don't we wait an'
see?

CAIN When would dat be?

CAIN'S GIRL Tonight After supper
Think you kin walk a little further
now, City Boy?

CAIN Yeh, I ain't so weary now
(*She takes his hand*)

CAIN'S GIRL What yo' name? (*Takes
his arm*)

CAIN Cain

CAIN'S GIRL Den I'm Cain's Gal
Come on honey, an' meet de folks
(They exit The CHOIR is heard
singing "You Better Mind," as GOD
enters GOD watches the vanished
CAIN and his girl)

GOD (after shaking his head) Bad
business I don' like de way things is
goin' atall
(The stage is darkened The CHOIR
continues singing until the lights go
up on the next scene)

SCENE VI

GOD's private office in Heaven It is a small room, framed by tableau curtains
A large window up center looks out on the sky There is a battered roll-top
desk On the wall next to the window is a framed religious oleograph with a
calendar attached to it underneath A door is at the left A hat rack is on the
wall above the door There are two or three cheap pine chairs beside the
window, and beyond the door In front of the desk is an old swivel armchair
which creaks every time GOD leans back in it The desk is open and various
papers are stuck in the pigeonholes Writing implements, etc are on the
desk On a shelf above the desk is a row of law books A cuspidor is near
the desk, and a waste basket by it The general atmosphere is that of the
office of a Negro lawyer in a Louisiana town As the lights go up GOD takes a
fresh cigar from a box on the desk and begins puffing it without bothering to
light it There is no comment on this minor miracle from GABRIEL who is
sitting in one of the chairs with a pencil and several papers in his hand The
singing becomes pianissimo

GABRIEL (looking at the papers)
Well, I guess dat's about all de im-
portant business dis mornin' Lawd

"Cherub Christina Montgomery,
wings is moltn' out of season an'
nobody knows what to do"

GOD How 'bout dat cherub over to
Archangel Montgomery's house?

GOD Well, now, take keer of dat
You gotter be more careful Gabe

GABRIEL Where do dey live, Lawd?
(The singing stops)

GOD Dat little two-story gold house,
over by de pearly gates

GABRIEL Oh, dat Montgomery I
thought you was referin' to de ol'
gentleman Oh, yeh (He sorts
through the papers and finds one he
is looking for) Yere 'tis (Reads)

GABRIEL Yes, Lawd (Folds the pa-
pers and puts them in a pocket GOD
turns to his desk, takes another puff
or two of the cigar, and with a pen-
cil, begins checking off items on a
sheet of paper before him His back
is turned toward GABRIEL GABRIEL
takes his trumpet from the hat rack
and burnishes it with his robe He
then wets his lips and puts the
mouthpiece to his mouth)

GOD (*without turning around*)
Now, watch yo'self, Gabriel

GABRIEL I wasn't goin' to blow,
Lawd I jest do dat every now an'
den so I can keep de feel of it (*He*
leans trumpet against the wall GOD
picks up the papers and swings his
chair around toward GABRIEL)

GOD What's dis yere about de moon?

GABRIEL (*suddenly remembering*)
Oh! De moon people say it's begin-
nin' to melt a little, on count caize
de sun's so hot

GOD It's goin' 'roun' 'cordin' to
schedule, ain't it?

GABRIEL Yes, Lawd

GOD Well, tell 'em to stop groamin'
Dere's nothin' de matter wid dat
moon Trouble is so many angels is
flyin' over dere on Saddy night Dey
git to beatin' dere wings when dey
dancin' an' dat makes de heat Tell
dem dat from now on dancin' 'roun'
de moon is sinnin' Dey got to stop
it Dat'll cool off de moon (*He*
swings back and puts the paper on
the desk He leans back in the chair
comfortably, his hands clasped be-
hind his head) Is dere anythin' else
you ought to remin' me of?

GABRIEL De prayers, Lawd

GOD (*puzzled, slowly swinging chair*
around again) De prayers?

GABRIEL From mankind You know,
down on de earth

GOD Oh, ych, de poor little earth
Bless my soul, I almos forgot about
dat Mus' be three or four hund'ed
years since I been down dere I
wasn't any too pleased wid dat job

GABRIEL (*laughing*) You know you
don' make mistak's, Lawd

GOD (*soberly, with introspective de-*
tachment) So dey tell me (*He looks*
at GABRIEL, then through the win-
dow again) So dey tell me I fin' I
kun be displeased though, an' I was
displeased wid de mankind I las
seen Maybe I ought to go down dere
again—I need a little holiday

GABRIEL Might do you good, Lawd

GOD I think I will I'll go down an'
walk de earth agin an' see how dem
poor humans is makin' out What
time is it, by de sun an' de stars?

GABRIEL (*glancing out of the win-*
dow) Jest exictly half-past, Lawd
(*GOD is taking his hat and stick from*
the hat rack)

GOD (*opening the door*) Well, take
keer o' yo'self I'll be back Saddy
(*He exits*)

(*The stage is darkened The CHORUS*
begins "Dere's No Hulin' Place," and
continues until the lights go up on
the next scene)

SCENE VII

GOD is walking along a country road He stops to listen Church bells are
heard in the distance

GOD Dat's nice Nice an' quiet Dat's de way I like Sunday to be *(The sound is broken by a shrill voice of a girl It is ZEBBA singing a "blues")* Now, dat ain't so good *(GOD resumes his walk and the upper treadmill brings on a tree stump on which ZEBBA is sitting She is accompanying her song with a ukulele COD and the treadmill stop When the stump reaches the center of the stage, it is seen that ZEBBA is a rouged and extremely flashily dressed chippy of about eighteen)* Stop dat!

ZEBBA What's de matter wid you, Country Boy? Pull up yo' pants *(She resumes singing)*

COD Stop dat!

ZEBBA *(stops again)* Say, listen to me, Banjo Eyes What right you got to stop a lady enjoyin' herself?

COD Don't you know dis is de Sabbath? Dis no kin' o' song to sing on de Lawd's day

ZEBBA Who care 'bout de Lawd's day, anymo'? People jest use Sunday now to git over Saddy

GOD You a awful sassy little girl

ZEBBA I come fum sassy people! We even speak mean of de dead

COD What's yo' name?

ZEBBA *(flirtatiously)* "What's my name?" Ain't you de ol'-time gal hunter! Fust, "What's my name?" den I s'pose, what would it be like if you tried to kiss me? You preachers is de debbils

GOD I ain't aimin to touch you, daughter *(A sudden sternness*

frightens ZEBBA She looks at him sharply) What is yo' name?

ZEBBA Zeba

GOD Who's yo' fam'ly?

ZEBBA I'm de great-great gran' daughter of Seth

GOD Of Seth? But Seth was a good man

ZEBBA Yeh, he too good, he die of holiness

GOD An' yere's his little gran' daughter reckon' wid cologne Ain't nobody ever tol' you yo' on de road to Hell?

ZEBBA *(smiling)* Sho', dat's what de preacher say Exceptin' of course, I happens to know dat I'm on de road to de picnic groun's, an' at de present time I'm waitin' to keep a engagement wid my sweet papa He don't like people talkin' to me *(CAIN THE SIXTH enters He is a young huck, wearing a "box" coat and the other flashy garments of a Rampart Street swell)*

CAIN THE SIXTH Hello, sugah! *(He crosses in front of GOD and faces ZEBBA)* Hello, mamma! Sorry I'm late, baby, but de gals in de barrel-house jest wouldn't let me go Dog-gone, one little wirehead swore she'd tear me down *(ZEBBA smiles and takes his hand)*

GOD What's yo' name, son?

CAIN THE SIXTH *(contemptuously, without turning)* Soap 'n' water, Country Boy

GOD (*sternly*) What's yo' name, son?
(*CAIN slowly turns and for a moment his manner is civil*)

CAIN THE SIXTH Cain the Sixth

GOD I was afraid so

CAIN THE SIXTH (*his impudence returning*) You a new preacher?

GOD Where you live?

CAIN THE SIXTH Me, I live mos' any place

GOD Yes, an' you gonter see dem all
Is de udder young men all like you?

CAIN THE SIXTH (*smiling*) De gals
don' think so (*He turns towards
ZENA again picks her up and sits on
the stump with the laughing ZENA
on his lap*)

ZENA Dev ain't nobody in de worl'
like my honey-cake
(*CAIN kisses her and she resumes her
song* GOD watches them ZENA fin-
ishes a verse of the song and begins
another softly. CAIN THE SIXTH's eyes
have been closed during the sing-
ing)

CAIN THE SIXTH (*his eyes closed*)
Is de preacher gone?
(*ZENA looks quickly at GOD without
seeing him and then looks off. She
stops the song*)

ZENA Yeh, I guess he walks fast
(*CAIN pushes her off his lap and
rises*)

CAIN THE SIXTH (*with acid sweet-
ness*) Dev tell me his night you was
talking to a creeper man, baby

ZENA Why, you know dey ain't no-
body in de world fo' me but you

CAIN THE SIXTH (*smiling*) I know
dey ain't I even got dat guaranteed
(*Takes a revolver from his pocket*)
See dat, baby?

ZENA Sho' I see it, honey

CAIN THE SIXTH Dat jest makes me
positive (*Puts the gun back*)

ZENA (*pushing him back on the
stump*) You don' wantter believe
dem stories, papa

CAIN THE SIXTH (*with sinister light-
ness*) No I didn't believe dem, ba-
by Cose dat big gorilla, Flatfoot,
from de other side of de river is in
town ag'in

ZENA Dit don' mean nothin' Flat-
foot ain't nothin' to me

CAIN THE SIXTH (*sitting again*)
Cose he unt Go' head, sing some
mo' baby
(*ZENA resumes singing*)

GOD Bid business (*The treadmills
start turning. GOD resumes his walk.
ZENA, still singing, and CAIN THE
SIXTH recede with the landscape.
GOD is again alone on the country
road. There is a twitter of birds.
GOD looks up and smiles. De birds
is goin' bout dere business all right.
(A patch of flowers goes by, black-
eyed Susans, conspicuously) How
you flowers makin' out? (CHILDREN's
voices answer "We O K, Lawd")
Yes an' you looks very pretty (CHIL-
DREN's voices "Thank you Lawd")
The flowers pass out of sight) It's
only de human bein's makes me
downhearted Yere's as nice a Sunday
as dev is turnin' out anywhere, an'
nobody makin' de right use of it
(*Something ahead of him attracts his
attention. His face brightens*) Well,*

now dis is mo' like it Now dat's nice to see people prayin' It's a wonder dey don' do it in de church But I fin' I don' min' it if dey do it out-doors

(A group of five adult Negroes and a boy on their knees in a semicircle appears The treadmills stop The boy, his head bent, swings his hands rhythmically up to his head three or four times There is a hush)

GAMBLER Oh, Lawd, de smoke-house is empty Oh, Lawd, lemme git dem groceries Oh, Lawd lemme see dat little six (He casts the dice) Wham! Dere she is, frin's (Exclamations from the others "Well damn my eyes!" "Doggone dat's de eighth pass he make" "For God's sake, can't you ever crap?" etc The boy is picking up the money)

GOD Gamblin'! (Looks over the group's shoulders) An' wid frozen dice!

BOY GAMBLER Dev's a dolla' 'n' a half talkin' to' me How much you want of it, Riney?

FIRST GAMBLER I take fo' bits Wait a minute Mebbe I take a little mo' (He counts some money in his hand)

SECOND GAMBLER (glancing up at GOD) Hello, Liver Lips (To the others) Looka ol' Liver Lips (The others look up and laugh good-naturedly, repeating "Liver Lips")

FIRST GAMBLER Ain't his pockets high from de groun'? Ol' High-Pockets (The others keep saying "Ol' Liver Lips" "Ol' Liver Lips don't like to see people dicin'" "Dat's a good name, 'High Pockets'")

BOY GAMBLER (to others) Come on you gonter fade me or not? (GOD seizes the boy's ears and drags him to his feet The others do not move, but watch amused)

GOD Come yere, son Why, yo' jest a little boy Gamblin' an' sinnin' (GOD looks at the boy's face) You been chewin' tobacco, too, like you was yo' daddy (GOD sniffs) An' you been drinkin' sonny-kick-mammy-wine You oughta be 'shamed (To the others) An' you gamblers oughta be 'shamed, leadin' dis boy to sin

FIRST GAMBLER He de bes' crap shooter in town, mister

GOD I'm gonter tell his mammy I but she don' know 'bout dis

FIRST GAMBLER No, she don' know (The others laugh) She don' know anythin'

SECOND GAMBLER Das de God's truth

FIRST GAMBLER See kin you beat 'im, High Pockets Dey's a dolla' open yere

GOD I ain't gonter beat 'im I'm gonter teach 'im I may have to teach you all (He starts walking from them The boy sticks out his tongue the moment GOD's back is turned)

BOY GAMBLER If you fin' my mammy you do mo'n I kin Come on, gamblers, see kin you gumme a little action Who wants any part of dat dollar?

(The treadmill carries them off The FIRST GAMBLER is heard saying "I'll take another two bits," and the others "Gimme a dime's wo' th," "I ain't only got fifteen cents left," etc, as they disappear)

GOD (*walking*) Where's dat little boy's home? (*The front of a shanty appears and GOD stops in front of the door*) Yere's de place It ain't any too clean, either (*Knocks on the door with his cane*)

VOICE IN SHANTY Who dar?

GOD Never you min' who's yere
Open de door

VOICE IN SHANTY You gotta search warrant?

GOD I don' need one

VOICE IN SHANTY Who you want see?

GOD I want see de mammy of de little gamblin' boy

VOICE IN SHANTY You mean little Johnny Rucker?

GOD Dat may be his name

VOICE IN SHANTY Well, Mrs Rucker ain't home

GOD Where's she at?

VOICE IN SHANTY Who, Mrs Rucker?

GOD You heerd me

VOICE IN SHANTY Oh, she run away las' night wid a railroad man She's eloped

GOD Where's Rucker?

VOICE IN SHANTY He's flat under de table He so drunk he can't move

GOD Who are you?

VOICE IN SHANTY I'se jest a fren' an' neighbor I come in las' night to de party, an' everybody in vere's dead drunk but me De only reason I kin talk is I drank some new white mule I made myself, an' it burn my throat so I can't drink no mo' You got any mo' questions?

GOD Not for you.
(*The shanty begins to move off as GOD starts walking again*)

VOICE IN SHANTY Good riddance, I say
(*Shanty disappears*)

GOD Dis ain't gittin' me nowhere
All I gotta say dis yere mankind I been peoplin' my earth wid sho' ain't much (*He stops and looks back*) I got good min' to wipe 'em all off an' people de earth wid angels No Angels is all right, singin' an' playin' an' flivin' around, but dey ain't much on workin' de crops and buildin' de levees No, suh, mankind's jest right for my earth, if he wasn't so dog-gone sinful I'd rather have my earth peopled wit' a bunch of channel cat-fish dan I would mankin' in' his sin I jest can't stan' sin (*He is about to resume his walk when NOAH enters NOAH is dressed like a country preacher His coat is of the "hammer-tail" variety He carries a prayer book under his arm*)

NOAH Mo'nin', brother

GOD Mo'nin', brother I declare you look like a good man

NOAH I try to be, brother I'm de preacher yere I don't think I seen you to de meetin'
(*They resume walking*)

GOD I jest come to town a little while ago an' I been pretty busy

NOAH Yeh, mos' everybody say dey's pretty busy dese days Dey so busy dey can't come to meetin' It seem like de mo' I preaches de mo' people ain't got time to come to church I ain't hardly got enough members to fill up de choir I gotta do de preach-in' an' de bassin' too

GOD Is dat a fac'?

NOAH Yes, suh, brother Everybody is mighty busy, gamblin', good-timin', an' goin' on You jest wait, though When Gabriel blow de horn you goner fin' dey got plenty of time to punch chunks down in Hell Yes, suh

GOD Seems a pity Dey all perfect'ly healthy?

NOAH Oh, dey healthy, all right Dey jest all lazy, and mean, and full of sin You look like a preacher, too, brother

GOD Well, I am, in a way

NOAH You jest passin' through de neighborhood?

GOD Yes I wanted to see how things was goin' in yo' part of de country, an' I been feelin' jest 'bout de way you do It's enough to discourage you

NOAH Yes, but I gotta keep wres'lin' wid 'em Where you boun' for right now, brother?

GOD I was jest walkin' along I thought I might stroll on to de nex' town

NOAH Well, dat's a pretty good distance I live right yere (*He stops walking*) Why don' you stop an' give us de pleasure of yo' comp'ny for dinner? I believe my ol' woman has kilt a chicken

GOD Why, dat's mighty nice of you, brother I don' believe I caught yo' name

NOAH Noah, jest brother Noah Dis is my home, brother Come right in (*GOD and NOAH start walking towards NOAH's house which is just coming into view on the treadmill The stage darkens, the CHOIR sings "Feastin Table," and when the lights go up again, the next scene is disclosed*)

SCENE VIII

Interior of NOAH's house The ensemble suggests the combination living-dining room in a fairly prosperous Negro's cabin Clean white curtains hang at the window A table and chairs are in the center of the room There is a cheerful checked tablecloth on the table, and on the wall, a framed, highly colored picture reading "God Bless Our Home"

NOAH'S WIFE, an elderly Negress, simply and neatly dressed, GOD and NOAH are discovered grouped about the table

NOAH Company, darlin' (NOAH'S WIFE takes NOAH's and GOD's hats)
Dis genman's a preacher, too He's
jest passin' through de country

GOD Good mo'nin', sister

NOAH'S WIFE Good mo'nin' You
jest ketch me when I'm gittin' dinner
ready You gonter stay with us?

GOD If I ain't intrudin' Brother
Noah suggested -

NOAH'S WIFE You set right down
here I got a chicken in de pot an'
it'll be ready in 'bout five minutes
I'll go out de back an' call Shem,
Ham an' Japheth (To GOD) Dey's
our sons Dey live right acrost de
way but always have Sunday dinner
wid us You mens make yo'selves
comfortable

GOD Thank you, thank you very
kindly

NOAH You run along, we all right
(GOD and NOAH seat themselves
NOAH'S WIFE exits)

GOD You got a fine wife, Brother
Noah

NOAH She pretty good woman

GOD Yes, suh, an' you got a nice
little home Have a ten cent seegar?
(GOD offers him one)

NOAH Thank you, much obliged
(Both men lean back restfully in
their chairs)

GOD Jest what seems to be de main
trouble 'mong mankind, Noah?

NOAH Well it seems to me de main
trouble is dat de whol' distric' is wide

open Now you know dat makes fo'
loose livin' Men folks spen's all
dere time fightin', lovin' an' gam-
blin', an' makin' bad likker

GOD What about de women?

NOAH De women is worse dan de
men If dey ain't makin' love
powder dey out beg-borrow-an'-steal-
in' money for policy tickets Doggone,
I come in de church Sunday 'fo' las'
'bout an hour befo' de meetin' was
to start, and dere was a woman steal-
in' de altar cloth She was goin' to
hock it Dey ain't got no moral sense
Now you take dat case las' month,
over in East Putney Case of dat
young Willy Roback

GOD What about him?

NOAH Dere is a boy seventeen years
old Doggone, if he didn't elope with
his aunt Now, you know, dat kin'
of goin' on is bad fo' a neighbor-
hood

GOD Terrible, terrible

NOAH Yes, suh Dis use' to be a nice,
decent community I been doin' my
best to preach de Word, but seems
like every time I preach de place jest
goes a little mo' to de dogs De good
Lawd only knows what's gonter hap-
pen

GOD Dat is de truth
(There is a pause Each puffs his
cigar Suddenly NOAH grasps his
knee, as if it were paining him, and
twists his foot)

NOAH Huh!

GOD What's de matter?

NOAH I jest got a twitch My buck-
aguer I guess Every now and den I
gets a twitch in de knee Might be a
sign of rain

GOD That's just what it is Noah,
what's de mos' rain you ever had
'round dese parts?

NOAH Well, de water come down fo'
six days steady last April an' de rib-
ber got so swole it bust down de
levee up 'bove Freeport Raise cain
all de way down to de delta

GOD What would you say was it to
rain for forty days and forty nights?

NOAH I'd say dat was a *complete*
rain!

GOD Noah, you don't know who I
is, do you?

NOAH (*puzzled*) Yo' face looks easy,
but I don't think I recall de name
(*GOD rises slowly, and as he reaches
his full height there is a crash of
lightning a moment's darkness, and
a roll of thunder It grows light
again NOAH is on his knees in front
of GOD*) I should have known you
I should have seen de glory

GOD Dat's all right, Noah You didn't
know who I was

NOAH I'm jes' ol' preacher Noah,
Lawd, an' I'm vo servant I ain' very
much, but I'se all I got

GOD Sit down, Noah Don't let me
hear you sham in' yo'se'f, caize yo' a
good man (*Timidly NOAH waits
until GOD is seated, and then sits,
himself*) I jest wanted to fin' out if
you was good, Noah Dat's why I'm
walkin' de earth in de shape of a
natchel man I wish dey was mo'

people like you But, far as I kin see,
you and yo' fam'ly is de only re-
spectable people in de worl'

NOAH Dey jest all poor sinners,
Lawd

GOD I know I am your Lawd I am
a god of wrath and vengeance an'
dat's why I'm gonter destroy dis
worl'

NOAH (*almost in a whisper, drawing
back*) Jest as you say, Lawd

GOD I ain't gonter destroy you, Noah.
You and yo' fam'ly, yo' sheep an'
cattle, an' all de udder things dat
ain't human I'm gonter preserve But
de rest is gotta go (*Takes a pencil
and a sheet of paper from his pocket*)
Look yere, Noah (*NOAH comes over
and looks over his shoulder*) I want
you to build me a boat I want you
to call it de "Ark," and I want it to
look like dis (*He is drawing on the
paper Continues to write as he
speaks*) I want you to take two of
every kind of animal and bird dat's
in de country I want you to take
seeds an' sprouts an' everythin' like
dat an' put dem on dat Ark, because
dere is gonter be all dat rain Dey's
gonter be a deluge, Noah, an' dey's
goin' to be a flood De levees is
gonter bust an' everything dat's fas-
tened down is comin' loose, but it
ain't gonter float long, caize I'm
gonter make a storm dat'll sink every-
thin' from a hencoop to a barn Dey
ain't a ship on de sca dat'll be able
to fight dat tempest Dey all got to
go Everythin' Everythin' in dis
pretty worl' I made, except one
thing, Noah You an' yo' fam'ly an
de things I said are going to ride
dat storm in de Ark Yere's de way
it's to be (*He hands NOAH the paper
NOAH takes it and reads*)

NOAH (*pause, looks at paper again*)
Yes, suh, dis seems to be complete
Now 'bout the animals, Lawd, you
say you want everythin'?

GOD Two of everythin'

NOAH Dat would include jayraffes
an' hippopotamusses?

GOD Everythin' dat is

NOAH Dey was a circus in town las'
week I guess I kin fin' dem Co'se I
kin git all de rabbits an' possums an'
wur turkeys easy I'll sen' de boys
out Hum, I'm jest wondenn—

GOD 'Bout what?

NOAH 'Bout snakes Think you'd like
snakes, too?

GOD Certainly, I want snakes

NOAH Oh, I kin git snakes, lots of
'em Co'se, some of 'em's a little
dangerous Maybe I better take a
kag of likker, too?

GOD You kun have a kag of likker

NOAH (*musingly*) Yes, suh, dey's a
awful lot of differ'nt kin's of snakes,
come to think about it Dey's water
moccasins, cotton-moufs, rattlers—
mus' be a hund'ed kin's of other

snakes down in de swamps Maybe
I better take two kags of likker

GOD (*mildly*) I think de one kag's
enough

NOAH No I better take two kags Be-
sides I kin put one on each side of
de boat, an' balance de ship wid dem
as well as havin' dem fo' medicinal
use

GOD You kun put one kag in de mid-
dle of de ship

NOAH (*buoyantly*) Jest as eazy to
take de two kags, Lawd

GOD I think one kag's enough

NOAH Yes, Lawd, but you see, forty
days an' forty nights—
(*There is a distant roll of thunder*)

GOD (*firmlly*) Onc kag, Noah

NOAH Yes, Lawd One kag
(*The door in the back opens and
NOAH'S WIFE enters with a tray of
dishes and food*)

NOAH'S WIFE Now, den, gen'lemen,
if you'll jest draw up cheers
(*The stage is darkened The CHOIR
is heard singing "I Want to Be
Ready" They continue in the dark-
ness until the lights go up on the
next scene*)

SCENE IX

*In the middle of the stage is the Ark On the hillside, below the Ark, a dozen
or more men and women, townspeople, are watching NOAH SIEM HAM and
JABREH on the deck of the Ark The three sons are busily nailing boards on
the cabin NOAH is smoking a pipe He wears a silk hat, captain's uniform
and a "slicker"*

NOAH (to SHEM) You, Shem, tote up some ol' rough lumber, don' bring up any planed-up lumber, caize dat ain't fo' de main deck

SHEM Pretty near supper time, daddy

NOAH Maybe 'tis, but I got de feelin' we ought to keep goin'

FIRST WOMAN You gonter work all night, Noah, maybe, huh?

NOAH (without looking at her) If de sperit move me

SECOND WOMAN Look yere, Noah, whyn't you give up all dis damn foolishness? Don' you know people sayin' 'no crazy? What you think you doin' anyway?

NOAH I'se buildin' a Ark (*Other men and women join those in the foreground*) I lam, you better stop for a while 'n' see whether dey bringin' de animals up all right (*He looks at his watch*) Dey ought to be pretty near de foot o' de hill by dis time if dey ain't you wait fo' dem and bring 'em yo'self
(HAM goes down a ladder at the side of the ship and exits during the following scene. The newcomers in group have been speaking to some of the early arrivals.)

SECOND WOMAN (to THIRD WOMAN, one of the newcomers) No, you don't mean it!

THIRD WOMAN I do so. Dat's what de talk is in de town

FIRST WOMAN You hear dat, Noah? Dey say yo' ol' lady is tellin' everybody it's gonter rain fo' fo'ty days

and fo'ty nights. You know people soon gonter git de idea you all crazy

NOAH Lot I keef what you think (To JAPHETH) Straighten up dem boards down dere, Japheth (*Indicates floor of deck*)

FIRST WOMAN (to THIRD WOMAN). Was I you, I wouldn't go 'round with Mrs. Noah anymore, lady. Fust thing you know you'll be gittin' a hard name, too

THIRD WOMAN Don' I know?

SECOND WOMAN A lady can't be too partic'lar these days
(ZIBA and FLATFOOT, a tall, black wuked-looking buck, enter, their arms around each other's waists.)

ZIBA Dere it is, baby. Was I lyin'?

FLATFOOT Well, I'll be split in two!

FIRST MAN What you think of it, Flatfoot?

FLATFOOT I must say! I ook like a house wit' a warpin' cellar

NOAH Dis yere vessel is a boat

FLATFOOT When I was a little boy dey used to build boats down near de ribber, where de water was
(The others laugh.)

NOAH Dis time it's been arranged to have de water come up to de boat
(JAPHETH looks beligerently over the rail of the Ark at FLATFOOT. To JAPHETH) Keep yo' shirt on, son

SECOND WOMAN (to THIRD WOMAN) Now, you see de whole family's crazy

THIRD WOMAN Listen, dey ain't gonter 'taminat' me. It was me dat started resolvin' dem both out o' de buryin' society.

ZEBBA When all dis water due up yere, Noah?

NOAH You won't know when it gits yere, daughter.

ZEBBA Is she goin' to be a side-wheeler, like de Bessy-Belle?

FLATFOOT No! If she was a side-wheeler she'd get her wheels all joggled wid sharks. She gonter have jus' one great big stern wheel, like de Commodore. Den if dey ain't 'nuf water why de big wheel kin stir some up.
(General laughter. Two or three of the GAMBLERS enter and join the group, followed by CAIN THE SIXTH.)

CAIN THE SIXTH Dere's de fool an' his monument, jest like I said.
(The GAMBLERS and CAIN THE SIXTH roar with laughter, slap their legs, etc., the members of the main group talk sotto voce to each other as CAIN THE SIXTH catches ZEBBA'S eye. FLATFOOT is on her right and is not aware of CAIN THE SIXTH'S presence.)

NOAH See how dey makin' out inside, son. (Stops hammering. JAPHETH exits into Ark. NOAH turns and gazes towards the east.)

CAIN THE SIXTH Hello, honey.

ZEBBA (frightened but smiling) Hello, sugar.

CAIN THE SIXTH (pleasantly) Ain't dat my ol' frien' Flatfoot wid you?

ZEBBA Why, so 'tis! (FLATFOOT is now listening. To FLATFOOT) He's got a gun.

CAIN THE SIXTH No, I ain't. (He lifts his hands over his head. ZEBBA quickly advances and runs her hands lightly over his pockets.)

ZEBBA (relieved) I guess he ain't.

CAIN THE SIXTH No, I ain't got a gun for my ol' friend, Flatfoot. (He walks up to him.)

FLATFOOT (smiling) Hi, Cain. How's de boy?
(CAIN quickly presses his chest against FLATFOOT'S his downstage arm, sweeps around FLATFOOT'S body and his hand goes up to the small of FLATFOOT'S back.)

CAIN THE SIXTH (quietly, but triumphantly) I got a little knife fo' him.
(FLATFOOT falls dead. The laughter of the others stops and they look at the scene. ZEBBA for a moment is terrified, her clenched hand pressed to her mouth. She looks at CAIN THE SIXTH, who is smiling at her. He tosses the knife on the ground and holds his hands out to her. She goes to him, smiling.)

ZEBBA You sho' take keer of me, honey.

CAIN THE SIXTH Dat's caize I think yo' wo'th takin' keer of. (To the others) It's all right, folks. I jest had to do a little cleanin' up.

FIRST WOMAN (smiling) You is de quickest scoundrel!

FIRST GAMBLER It was a nice quick killin'. Who was he?

SECOND WOMAN (casually) Dey called him Flatfoot From over de river He wa'nt any good He owed me for washin' for over a year

THIRD WOMAN Used to paddle muggles Súd it had a kick like reglar snow Wasn't no good

SECOND GAMBLER Think we ought to bury him?

FIRST MAN No, just leave him dere Nobody comes up yere, 'cept ol' Manatee (*Indicates NOAH Cries of "Ol' Manatee! Ol' Manatee, dat's good!"*)

NOAH (still looking off) You bettah pray, you po' chillun (*They all laugh*)

FIRST WOMAN We bettah pray? You bettah pray, Ol' Manatee!

ZEBBA You bettah pray for rain (*Laughter again*)

NOAH Dat's what I ain't doin', sinners Shem! Japheth! (*To others, as he points off Patter of rain*) Listen!

CAIN THE SIXTH (casually) Dog-gone, I believe it is gonter shower a little

FIRST GAMBLER It do look like rain

FIRST WOMAN I think I'll git on home I got a new dress on

ZEBBA Me, too I wants to keep lookin' nice fo' my sweet papa (*She pats CAIN THE SIXTH'S cheek CAIN THE SIXTH hugs her*)

NOAH (almost frantically) Ham! Is de animals dere?

HAM (offstage) Yes, sir, dere yere We're comin'

NOAH Den bring 'em on (*SHAM and JAPHETH come on deck with their hammers The stage begins to darken*)

THIRD WOMAN I guess we all might go home til de shower's over Come on, papa

SECOND GAMBLER See you after supper, Noah (*Crowd starts moving off, right*)

NOAH God's gittin' ready to start, my sons Let's git dis plankin' done

ZEBBA Put a big Texas on it, Noah, an' we'll use it fo' excursions (*There is a distant roll of thunder, there are cries of "Good night Admiral" "See you later" "So long, Manatee," as the crowd goes off The thunder rumbles again There is the sound of increasing rain The hammers of SHAM and JAPHETH sound louder and are joined by the sounds of other hammerers There is a flash of lightning The choir begins "Dey Ol' Ark's a-Movering" the sounds on the Ark become faster and louder The rush of rain grows heavier*)

NOAH Hurry! Hurry! Where are you, Ham?

HAM (just off-stage) Yere I am, father, wid de animals

NOAH God's give us his sign Send 'em up de gangplank (*An inclined plank is thrown against the Ark from the side of the stage by HAM, who cracks a whip*)

HAM Get on, dere (*The heads of two elephants are seen*)

NOAH Bring 'em on board! De Lawd
is strikin' down de worl'
(*The singing and the noises reach
fortissimo as HAM cracks his whip*)

*again, and the rain falls on the stage
The stage is completely darkened
The CHOIR continues singing in the
darkness*)

SCENE X

*When the lights go up on scene, the Ark is at sea. Stationary waves run in
front of it. The hillside has disappeared. The Ark is in the only lighted area.*

SHEM is smoking a pipe on the deck leaning on the rail. A steamboat
whistle blows three short and one long blast. SHEM is surprised. In a moment
HAM appears, also with a pipe and joins SHEM at the rail.

SHEM Who'd you think you was
signallin'?

HAM Dat wasn't me, dat was daddy

SHEM He think he gonter git a reply?

HAM I don' know. He's been gittin'
a heap of comfort out of dat likker

SHEM De keg's nearly empty, ain't
it?

HAM Pretty nearly almos' (*They
look over the rail. A pause.*) Seen
anythin'?

SHLM Dis mornin' I seen somethin'
over dere might' a' been a fish

HAM Dat's de big news of de week

SHEM How long you think dis trip's
gonter las'?

HAM I don' know! Run fo'ty days
'n' fo'ty nights an' when dat stop' I
thought sho' we'd come up ag'inst a
san' bar o' somethin'. Looks now like
all dat rain was jest a little incident
of de trip (*The whistle blows again*)

Doggone! I wish he wouldn't do dat.
Fust thing we know he'll wake up
dem animals ag'in

(JAPHETH appears)

SHEM What de matter wit' de ol'
man, Jape?

JAPHETH Doggone, he say he had a
dream dat we're nearly dere. Dat's
why he pullin' de whistle cord. See
kin he git a' answer (*He looks over
the rail.*) Look to me like de same ol'
territory

(MRS. NOAH appears on deck)

NOAH'S WIFE You boys go stop yo'
piw pullin' dat cord. He so full of
likker he think he's in a race

JAPHETH He claim he know what
he's doin'

NOAH'S WIFE I claim he gittin' to
be a perfec' nuisance. Me an' yo'
wines can't hardly heal ou'selves
think (*NOAH appears, his hat rak-
ishly tilted on his head. He goes to
the railing and looks out.*) You 'spect-
in' company?

NOAH Leave me be, woman De watah don' look so rough today De ol' boat's ridin' easier

NOAH'S WIFE Ridin' like a ol' mule!

NOAH Yes, suh, de air don't feel so wet Shem! 'Spose you sen' out 'nother dove (SHEM goes into the Ark) Ham, go git de soundin' line Jape, keep yo' eye on de East (JAPHETH goes to the end of the boat)

NOAH'S WIFE As fo' you, I s'pose you'll help things along by takin' a little drink

NOAH Look yere, who's de pilot of dis vessel?

NOAH'S WIFE Ol' Mister Dumb Luck

NOAH Well, see, dat's where you don' know anythin'

NOAH'S WIFE I s'pose you ain't drunk as a fool?

NOAH (cordially) I feel congenial

NOAH'S WIFE An' you look it You look jest wonderful I wonder if you'd feel so congenial if de Lawd was to show up?

NOAH De Lawd knows what I'm doin' don' you worry 'bout dat

NOAH'S WIFE I wouldn't say anythin' aginst de Lawd He suttinly let us know dey'd be a change in de weather But I bet even de Lawd wonders sometimes why he ever put you in charge

NOAH Well, you let de Lawd worry 'bout dat
(SHEM appears with the dove)

SHEM Will I leave her go, Paw?

NOAH Leave 'er go (There is a chorus of "Good Luck, Dove," from the group as the dove flies off-stage HAM appears with the sounding line) Throw 'er over, Boy
(HAM proceeds to do so)

NOAH'S WIFE An' another thing—

HAM Hey!

NOAH (rushing to his side) What is it?

HAM Only 'bout a inch! Look!
(They lean over)

JAPHETH It's gettin' light in de East (As HAM works the cord up and down NOAH and NOAH'S WIFE turn toward JAPHETH The CHORUS begins "My Soul Is a Witness for the Lord")

NOAH Praise de Lawd, so it is

NOAH'S WIFE Oh, dat's pretty

NOAH (to HAM) An' de boats stopped We've landed Shem, go down 'n' drag de fires an' dreen de boiler Yo' go help 'im, Ham

JAPHETH Look, Paw
(The dove ungs back to the Ark with an olive branch in its mouth)

NOAH 'N' yere's de little dove wid greenery in its mouth! Take 'er down, Jape, so she kin tell de animals (JAPHETH exits after SHEM and HAM carrying the dove To MRS NOAH) Now, maybe you feel little different

NOAH'S WIFE (contritely) It was jes' gittin' to be so tiresome I'm sorry, Noah

NOAH Dat's all right, ol' woman
(NOAH'S WIFE exits NOAH looks
about him The lights have changed
and the water piece is gone and the
Ark is again on the hillside Two
mountains can be seen in the dis-
tance and a rainbow slowly appears
over the Ark The singing has grown
louder) Thank you Lawd thank you
very much indeed Amen
(The singing stops with the "Amen"
GOD appears on the deck)

GOD Yo' welcome, Noth
(NOAH turns and sees him)

NOAH O, Lawd, it's wonderful

GOD (looking about him) I sort of
like it I like de way you handled de
ship, too, Noah

NOAH Was you watchin', Lawd?

GOD Every minute (He smiles)
Didn't de ol' lady light into you?

NOAH (apologetically) She was
kinda restless

GOD That's all right I ain't blamin'
nobody I don't even min' you' cussin'
an' drinkin' I figure a steamboat
cap'n on a long trip like you had has
a right to a little redeve, jest so he
don't go crazy

NOAH Thank you, Lawd What's de
orders now?

GOD All de animals safe?

NOAH Dev all fin'n' dandy, Lawd

GOD Den I want you to open dat
starboard door, an' leave 'em all out
Let 'em go down de hill Den you
an' de family take all de seeds 'n' de

sprouts an' begin plantin' ag'in I'm
startin' all over, Noah
(NOAH exits GOD looks around)

GOD Well, now we'll see what hap-
pens (GOD listens with a smile, as
noises accompanying the debarking
of the animals are heard There are
the cracks of whips, the voices of the
men on the Ark, shouting "Git
along dere" "Whoa, take it easy"
"Duck yo' head" "Keep in line dere,"
etc Over the Ark there is a burst of
centrifugal shadows, and the sound
of a myriad of wings GOD smiles at
the shadows) Dat's right, birds, fin'
yo' new homes (Bird twitters are
heard again GOD listens a moment
and rests an arm on the railing He
speaks softly) Gabriel, kin you spare
a minute?
(GABRIEL appears)

GABRIEL Yes, Lawd?
(The sounds from the other side of
the Ark are by now almost hushed
GOD indicates the new world with a
wave of the hand)

GOD Well, it's did

GABRIEL (respectfully, but with no
enthusiasm) So I take notice

GOD Yes, suh, startin' all over again

GABRIEL So I see

GOD (looking at him suddenly) Don'
seem to set you up much

GABRIEL Well, Lawd, you see— (He
hesitates) 'Tain't none of my busi-
ness

GOD What?

GABRIEL I say, I don' know very
much about it

GOD I know you don' I jest wanted you to see it (*A thought strikes him*) Co'se, it ain' yo' business, Gabe It's my business 'Twas my idea De whole thing was my idea An' every bit of it's my business 'n' nobody else's De whole thing rests on my shoulders I declare, I guess *dat's* why I feel so solemn an' serious, at dis

particklar time You know *dis* thing's turned into quite a proposition

GABRIEL (*tenderly*) But, it's all right, Lawd As you say, it's did

GOD Yes, suh, it's did (*Sighs deeply Looks slowly to the right and the left Then softly*) I only hope it's goin' to work out all right

CURTAIN

PART TWO

SCENE I

GOD's office again

Somewhere the CHOIR is singing "A City Called Heaven" In the office are two WOMEN CLEANERS One is scrubbing the floor, the other dusting the furniture The one dusting stops and looks out the window There is a whirr and a distant faint Boom The CHOIR stops

FIRST CLEANER Dat was a long way off

FIRST CLEANER De earth? You mean dat little ol' dreennin' place?

SECOND CLEANER (*at window*) Yes, ma'am An' dat must a' been a big one Doggone, de Lawd mus' be mad fo' sho', dis mo'nin' Dat's de fo'ty-six' thunde'bolt since breakfast

SECOND CLEANER Dat's de planet (*Another faint whirr and boom*) Dere goes another

FIRST CLEANER I wonder where at He's pitchin' dem

FIRST CLEANER Well, bless me I didn't know dey was thunde'bolts

SECOND CLEANER My goodness, don' you know?

SECOND CLEANER Wha'd you think dey was?

FIRST CLEANER (*a little hurt*) Did I know I wouldn't ask de question

FIRST CLEANER (*above desk*) I wasn't sho', but I thought may be He might be whittlin' a new star o' two, an' de noise was jest de chips fallin'

SECOND CLEANER Every one of dem's bound fo' de earth

SECOND CLEANER Carrie, where you been? Don' you know de earth is de

new scandal? Ever'body's talkin' about it

FIRST CLEANER Dey kep' it from me

SECOND CLEANER Ain't you noticed de Lawd's been unhappy lately?

FIRST CLEANER (*thoughtfully*) Yeah, He ain't been his old self

SECOND CLEANER What did you think was de matteh? Lumbago?

FIRST CLEANER (*petulantly*) I didn't know I didn't think it was fo' me t'inquieh

SECOND CLEANER Well, it jest so happens dat de Lawd is riled as kin be by dat measly little earth Or I should say de scum dat's on it

FIRST CLEANER Dat's mankind down dere

SECOND CLEANER Dey mus' be scum, too, to git de Lawd so wukked up

FIRST CLEANER I s'pose so (*Another whirr and boom*) I looks like He's lettin' dem feel de wrath Ain' dat a shame to plague de Lawd dat way?

SECOND CLEANER From what I hear dey been beggin' fo' what dey're gittin' My brother flew down to bring up a saint de other day and he say from what he see mos' of de population down dere has made de debbil king an' dey wukkin' in three shifts fo' him

FIRST CLEANER You can't blame de Lawd

SECOND CLEANER Co'se you can't Dem human bein's 'd make anybody

bile oveh Ev'rytime de Lawd try to do sompin' fo' dem, doggone if dey don't stah't some new ruckus

FIRST CLEANER I take notice He's been wukkin' in yere mo' dan usual

SECOND CLEANER I wish He'd let us ladies fix it up Wouldn't take a minute to make dis desk gold-plated

FIRST CLEANER I s'pose He likes it dis way De Lawd's kind o' ol' fashioned in some ways I s'pose He keeps dis office plain an' simple on purpose

SECOND CLEANER (*finishing her work*) I don't see why

FIRST CLEANER (*looking off*) Well, it's kind of a nice place to come to when He's studyin' somethin' important 'Most evahthin' else in heaven's so fine 'n' gran', maybe ev'ry now an' den He jest gits sick an' tired of de glory (*She is also collecting her utensils*)

SECOND CLEANER Maybe so Jest de same I'd like to have a free hand wid dis place for a while, so's I could gold it up
(*COD appears in the doorway*)

GOD Good mo'nin', daughters

FIRST and SECOND CLEANERS Good mo'nin', Lawd We was jest finish in'

COD Go ahead den, daughters (*Goes to the window*)

FIRST and SECOND CLEANERS Yes, Lawd (*They exeunt Off-stage*) Good mo'nin', Gabriel
(*Off-stage GABRIEL says, "Good mo'-*

nin', sisters," and enters immediately. He stands in the doorway for a moment watching GOD—a notebook and pencil in his hand.)

GOD What's de total?

GABRIEL (*consulting the book*) Eighteen thousand nine hund'ed an' sixty for de mo'nin' Dat's includin' de village wid de fo'tune tellers Dey certainly kin breed fast

GOD (*softly*) Dey displease me Dey displease me greatly

GABRIEL Want some more bolts, Lawd?

GOD (*looking through window*) Look at 'em dere Squirmin' an' fightin' an' bearin' false witness Listen to dat liar, dere He don' intend to marry dat little gal He don' even love her What did you say?

GABRIEL Should I git mo' bolts?

GOD Wait a minute (*He carefully points his finger down through the window*) I'm goin' to git dat wicked man myself (*From a great distance comes an agonized cry "Oh, Lawd!"*) GOD turns from the window) No use gittin' mo' thunde'bolts Dey don' do de trick (*He goes to the swivel chair and sits*) It's got to be somethin' else

GABRIEL How would it be if you was to doom 'em all ag'in, like dat time you sent down de flood? I bet dat would make dem mind

GOD You see how much good de flood did Dere dey is, jest as bad as ever

GABRIEL How about cleanin' up de whole mess of 'em and sta'tin' all over ag'in wid some new kind of animal?

GOD An' admit I'm licked?

GABRIEL (*ashamedly*) No, of co'se not, Lawd

GOD No, suh No, suh Man is a kind of pet of mine and it ain't right fo' me to give up tryin' to do somethin' wid him Doggone, mankin' mus' be all right at de core or else why did I ever bother wid him in de first place? (*Sits at desk*)

GABRIEL It's jest dat I hates to see you worryin' about it, Lawd

GOD Gabe, dere ain't anythin' worth while anywheres dat didn't cause somebody some worryin' I ain't never tol' you de trouble I had git tin' things started up yere Dat's a story in itself No, suh, de more I keep on bein' de Lawd de more I know I got to keep improvin' things An' dat takes time and worry De main trouble wid mankin' is he takes up so much of my time He ought to be able to help hussell a little (*He stops suddenly and cogitates*) Hev, dere! I think I got it!

GABRIEL (*eagerly*) What's de news?

GOD (*still cogitating*) Yes, suh, dat seems like an awful good idea

GABRIEL Tell me, Lawd

GOD Gabriel, have you noticed dat every now an' den, mankin' turns out some pretty good specimens?

GABRIEL Dat's de truth

GOD Yes, suh Dey's ol' Abraham and Isaac an' Jacob an' all dat family

GABRIEL Dat so, Lawd

GOD An' every one of dem boys was a hard wukker an' a good citizen We got to admit dat

GABRIEL Dey wouldn't be up yere flyin' wid us if dey hadn't been

GOD No, suh An' I don' know but what de answer to de whole trouble is right dere

GABRIEL How you mean, Lawd?

GOD Why, doggone it, de good man s de man dat keeps busy I mean I been goin' along on de principle dat he was something like you angels—dat you ought to be able to give him somethin' an' den just let him sit back in' enjoy it Dat ain't so Now dat I recollect I put de first one down dere to take keer o' dat garden an' den I let him go ahead an' do nothin' but git into mischief *(He rises)* Sure, dat's it He ain't built jest to fool 'roun' an' not do nothin' Gabe, I'm gonter try a new scheme

GABRIEL *(eagerly)* What's de scheme, Lawd?

GOD I'll tell you later Send in Abraham, Isaac an' Jacob *(A voice outside calls "Right away, Lawd")* You go tell dem to put dem bolts back in de boxes I ain' gonter use dem agin a while

GABRIEL O K, Lawd

GOD Was you goin' anywhere near de Big Pit?

GABRIEL I could go

GOD Lean over de brink and tell Satan he's jest a plain fool if he thinks he kin beat anybody as big as me

GABRIEL Yes, suh, Lawd Den I'll spit right in his eye *(GABRIEL exits)* *(GOD looks down through the window again to the earth below)*

GOD Dat new polish on de sun makes it powerful hot *(He "rars back")* Let it be jest a little bit cooler *(He feels the air)* Dat's nice *(Goes to His desk A knock on the door)* Come in *(ABRAHAM, ISAAC and JACOB enter All are very old men, but the beard of ABRAHAM is the longest and whitest, and they suggest their three generations They have wings that are not quite so big as those of the native angels)*

ISAAC Sorry we so long comin', Lawd But Pappy and me had to take de boy *(Pointing to JACOB)* over to git him a can of wing ointment

GOD What was de matter, son?

JACOB Dev was chafin' me a little Dey fine now, thank you, Lawd

GOD Dat's good Sit down in' make yo'selves comf'table *(The three sit MEN "Thank you Lawd")* Men, I'm goin' to talk about a little scheme I got It's one dat's goin' to affect yo' fam'lies in' dat's why I cided I'd talk it over wid you, 'fo' it goes into effect I don't know whether you boys know it or not but you is about de three best men of one fam'ly dat's come up yere since I made hittle apples Now I tell you what I'm gonter do Seem' dat you human bein's can't 'preciate anythin' lessen you fust wukk to git it and den keep strugglin' to hold it, wh' I'm gonter turn over a very valuable piece of prop-

erty to yo' fam'ly, and den see what kin dey do with it De rest of de worl' kin go jump in de river fo' all I keer I'm gonter be lookin' out fo' yo' descendants onl' Now den, secin' dat you boys know de country pretty tho'ly, where at does you think is de choice piece of property in de whole worl'? Think it over for a minute I'm gonter let you make de s'lection

ABRAHAM If you was to ask me, Lawd, I don't think dey come any better dan de Iard of Canaan

GOD (to ISAAC and JACOB) What's yo' feelin' in de matter?

JACOB (after a nod from ISAAC) Pippv an' me think do we get a pick, d'it would be it

GOD (goes to window again looks out) De Land of Canaan Yes I guess dat's a likely neighborhood Its all run over wid Philistines and things right now but we kin clem dat up (He turns from the window and resumes his seat) All right Now who do you boys think is de best of vo' men to put in charge down dere? You see I ain't been payin' much attention to anybody in partic'lar lately

ISAAC Does you want de brainiest or de holiest, Lawd?
(MEN look up)

GOD I want de holiest I'll make him brainy
(MEN appreciate the miracle)

ISAAC (as ABRAHAM and JACOB nod to him) Well, if you want A Number One goodness, Lawd, I don't know where you'll git more satisfaction dan in a great-great great-grandson of mine

GOD Where's he at?

ISAAC At de moment I bieve he's in de sheep business over in Midian County He got in a little trouble down in Egypt, but t'wan't his doin' He killed a man dat was abusin one of our boys in de brick works Ol co'se you know old King Pharaoh's got all our people in bondage

GOD I heard of it (With some ire) Who did you think put them dere? (The visitors lower their heads) It's all right, boys (All rise) I'm gonter take dem out of it An' I'm gonter turn over de whole Iard of Canaan to dem An' do you know whose gonter lead dem dere? Yo' great, great, gic it, great grandson Moses, ain't it?

ISAAC Yes, Lawd

GOD (smiling) Yes I been noticin' him

ABRAHAM It's quite a favor fo' de fam'ly, Lawd

GOD Dat's why I tol' you You see, it so happens I love vo' fam'ly, an' I delight to honor it Dat's all, gen'lemen (The three others rise and cross to the door, murmuring, "Yes, Lawd," "Thank you, Lawd," "Much obliged, Lawd," etc) The CHOR begins, "My Lord's A-Writin' All De Time" pianissimo GOD stands watching the men leave) Enjoy vo'selves (He goes to the window The singing grows softer He speaks through the window to the earth) I'm comin' down to see you, Moses, an' dis time my scheme's got to wuk (The stage is darkened The singing grows louder and continues until the lights go up on the next scene)

SCENE II

The tableau curtains frame the opening of a cave, which is dimly lighted. A large turkey-berry bush is somewhere near the foreground. MOSES is seated on the grass eating his lunch from a basket in his lap. ZIPPORAH, his wife, stands watching him. He is about forty, ZIPPORAH somewhat younger. They are dressed inconspicuously. MOSES stutters slightly when he speaks. He looks up to see ZIPPORAH smiling.

MOSES What you smilin' at, Zipporah?

ZIPPORAH Caize you enjoyin' yo'self

MOSES You is a good wife, Zipporah

ZIPPORAH You is a good husband, Moses. (MOSES wipes his mouth with a handkerchief and begins putting into the basket the various implements of the meal which had been on the ground about him.) Why you suppose it's so dark yere today? Dey's no rain in de air

MOSES Seems like it's jest aroun' dis cave. Yo' father's house is got de sun on it. (He looks in another direction.) Looks all clear down toward Egypt

ZIPPORAH Co'se it would be fine weather in Egypt. De sky looks all right. Maybe it's gonter rain jest right yere. Why don't you move de sheep over to de other pasture?

MOSES (a bit puzzled) I don't know. It got dark like dis befo' you come along wid de dinner an' I was gonter stop you on de top of de hill. Den somethin' kep' me yere.

ZIPPORAH S'pose it could be de Lawd warnin' you dat dey's 'Gyptians hangin' 'roun'?

MOSES Dey may have fo'gotten all 'bout dat killin' by now. Dey got a new Pharaoh down dere.

ZIPPORAH An' I hear he's jest as mean to yo' people as his pappy was. I wouldn't put it pis' him to send soljahs all the way up vere fo' you.

MOSES Dat's all right. De Lawd's looked after me so far, I don't 'spect him to fall down on me now. You better be gittin' home.

ZIPPORAH (taking the basket) I'll be worryin' about you.

MOSES (kissing her and then smiling) 'Parently de Lawd ain't. He knows I'm safe as kin be. Lemme see you feel dat way.

ZIPPORAH You is a good man, Moses.

MOSES I'se a lucky man. (ZIPPORAH exits with the basket. MOSES looks up at the sky.) Dat's funny. De sun seems to be shinin' everyplace but right yere. It's shinin' on de sheep. Why ain't dey no cloud dere?

GOD (off-stage) Caize I want it to be like dat, Moses

MOSES (looking about him) Who's dat?

GOD (off-stage again) I'm de Lawd, Moses

MOSES (smiling) Dat's what you say Dis yere shadow may be de Lawd's wukk, but dat voice soun' pretty much to me like my ol' brother Aaron

GOD (off-stage) Den keep yo' eyes open, son (*The turkey-berry bush begins to glow and then turns completely red* MOSES looks at it fascinated) Maybe you notice de bush ain't burnin' up

MOSES Dat's de truth (MOSES is full of awe but not frightened)

GOD (off-stage) Now you believe me?

MOSES Co'se I does It's wonderful (*The light in the bush dies and GOD appears from behind it*)

GOD No, it ain't, Moses It was jest a trick

MOSES 'Scuse me doubtin' you, Lawd I always had de feelin' you wuz takin' keer of me, but I never 'spected you'd fin' de time to talk wid me pus-sunly (*He laughs*) Dat was a good trick, Lawd I'se seen some good ones, but dat was de beatenest

GOD Yo' gonter see lots bigger tricks dan dat, Moses In fac', yo' gonter perfo'm dem

MOSES (incredulously) Me? I'm gonter be a tricker?

GOD Yes, suh

MOSES An' do magic? Lawd, my mouth ain't got de quick talk to go wid it

GOD It'll come to you now

MOSES (now cured of stuttering) Is I goin' wid a circus?

GOD (slowly and solemnly) Yo' is goin' down into Egypt, Moses, and lead my people out of bondage To do dat I'm gonter make you de bes' tricker in de worl'

MOSES (a little frightened) Egypt! You know I killed a man dere, Lawd Won't dey kill me?

GOD Not when dey see yo' tricks You ain't skeered, is you?

MOSES (simply and bravely) No, suh, Lawd

GOD Den yere's what I'm gonter do Yo' people is my chillun, Moses I'm sick and tired o' the way ol' King Pharaoh is treatin' dem, so I'se gonter take dem away, and yo' gonter lead dem You gonter lead 'em out of Egypt an' across de river Jordan It's gonter take a long time, and you ain't goin' on no excursion train Yo' gonter wukk awful hard for some-thin' yo' goin' to fin' when de trnp's over

MOSES What's dat, Lawd?

GOD It's de Land of Canaan It's de bes' land I got I've promised it to yo' people, an' I'm gonter give it to dem

MOSES Co'se, ol' King Pharaoh w'd do everything he kin to stop it

GOD Yes, an dat's where de tricks come in Dey tell me he's awful fond ol tricks

MOSES I hear dat's all he's fon' of Dey say if you can't take a rabbit out of a hat you cain't even git in to see him

GOD Wait'll you see de tricks you an' me's goin' to show him

MOSES (*delightedly*) Doggone! Huh, Lawd?

GOD Yes, suh Now de first trick—
(*GOD is lifting a stick which he carries*)

MOSES Jest a minute, Lawd (*GOD halts the demonstration*) I'm gonter learn de tricks and do just like you tell me, but I *know* it's gonter take me a little time to learn all dat quick talkin' Cain't I have my brother Aaron go wid me? He's a good man

GOD I was gonter have him help you wid de Exodus I guess he can watch, too

MOSES I'll call 'im (*He turns as if to shout*)

GOD Wait (*MOSES turns and looks at GOD*) I'll bring him (*Softly*) Aaron!

(*AARON appears between GOD and MOSES in the mouth of the cave He is a little taller than MOSES and slightly older He, too, is dressed like a field hand*)

AARON (*blankly*) Hey!
(*MOSES goes to him takes his hand and leads him, bewildered, down to where MOSES had been standing alone AARON then sees GOD*)

MOSES (*almost in a whisper*) It's all right

GOD Don't worry, son, I'm jest showin' some tricks Bringin' you vere was one of dem (*AARON stares at GOD as if hypnotized*) Now den, you see dis yere rod? Looks like a ordinary walking stick, don' it?

MOSES Ycs, Lawd

GOD Well, it ain't no ordinary walkin' stick, caize look (*MOSES leans forward*) When I lays it down on de groun'—

(*The stage is darkened The CHOIR begins, "Go Down, Moses," and continues until the lights go up on the next scene*)

SCENE III

The throne room of PHARAOH It suggests a Negro lodge room The plain board walls are covered by several large parade banners of varying sizes, colors and materials, bordered with gold fringe and tasseled Some of the inscriptions on them read

SUBLIME ORDER OF PRINCES OF THE HOUSE OF PHARAOH
*HOME CHAPTER

MYSTIC BROTHERS OF THE EGYPTIAN HOME GUARD
LADIES AUXILIARY, No 1

SUPREME MAGICIANS AND WIZARDS OF THE UNIVERSE

PRIVATE FLAG OF HIS HONOR OLD KING PHARAOH

ROYAL YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLEASURE CLUB

ENCHANTED AND INVISIBLE CADETS OF EGYPT BOYS' BRIGADE

There is one door up right and a window The throne, an ordinary arm chair with a drapery over its back, is on a dais PHARAOH is seated on the throne His crown and garments might be those worn by a high officer in a Negro lodge during a ritual About the throne itself are high officials, several of them with plumed hats, clothing that suggests military uniforms, and rather elaborate sword belts, swords and scabbards A few soldiers carrying spears are also in his neighborhood and one or two bearded ancients in brightly colored robes with the word "Wizard" on their conical hats In the general group of men and women scattered elsewhere in the room Sunday finery is noticeable everywhere Most of the civilians have bright "parade" ribbons and wear medals In a cleared space immediately before the throne a CANDIDATE MAGICIAN is performing a sleight-of-hand trick with cards PHARAOH watches him apathetically He is receiving earnest attention from a few of the others, but the majority of the men and women are talking quietly among themselves Beside the CANDIDATE MAGICIAN are several paraphernalia of previously demonstrated tricks

CANDIDATE MAGICIAN (*holding up some cards*) Now den, ol' King Pharaoh, watch dis (He completes a trick There is a murmur of "Not Bad," "Pretty Good," etc from a few of the watchers PHARAOH makes no comment) Now, I believe de cyard I ast you to keep sittin' on was de trey ol diamonds, wasn't it?

PHARAOH Yeah

CANDIDATE MAGICIAN Den kin I trouble you to take a look at it now? (PHARAOH half rises to pick up a card he has been sitting on, and looks at it) I believe you'll now notice dat it's de King of Clubs? (PHARAOH nods and shows the card to those nearest him The CANDIDATE MAGICIAN waits for an audible approval and gets practically none) An' dat,

ol' King Pharaoh, completes de puffomance (An elderly man in a uniform steps forward)

GENERAL On behalf of my nephew I beg Yo' Honor to let him jine de ranks of de royal trickers and magicians

PHARAOH (*to the two WIZARDS*) What do de committee think? (*The WIZARDS shake their heads*) Dat's what I thought He ain't good enough I'd like to help you out, General, but you know a man's got to be a awful good trickcr to git in de royal society dese days You better go back an' steady some mo', son (*He lifts his voice and directs two SOLDIERS guarding the door*) Is de head magician reached de royal wait-

in' room yit? *(One of the SOLDIERS opens the door to look out)* If he is, send him in

(The SOLDIER beckons to some one off-stage, throws the door open, and announces to the court)

SOLDIER De Head Magician of de land of Egypt

(A very old and villainous man enters. His costume is covered with cabalistic and zodiacal signs. He advances to the King, the other magician and his uncle making way for him. He bows curtsy to PHARAOH.)

HEAD MAGICIAN Good mo'nin', ol' King Pharaoh

PHARAOH Mo'nin', Professor. What's de news?

HEAD MAGICIAN Evahthing's bein' carried out like you said

PHARAOH How's de kilin' of de babies 'mongst de Hebrews comin' along?

HEAD MAGICIAN Jes' like you ordered

PHARAOH *(gemally)* Dey killed all of 'em, huh?

HEAD MAGICIAN Do dey see one, dey kill 'im. You teachin' 'em a great lesson. Dey don' like it a-tall

PHARAOH *(smiling)* What do dey say?

HEAD MAGICIAN *(pawing the air inarticulately)* I hates to tell in front of de ladies

PHARAOH Dey feels pretty bad, huh?

HEAD MAGICIAN Dat's jest de beginnin' of it. Betwixt de polcece and de

soljahs we killed about a thousan' of 'em las' night. Dat's purty good

PHARAOH *(thoughtfully)* Yeh, it's fair. I guess you boys is doin' all you kin. But I fin' I ain't satisfied, though

HEAD MAGICIAN How you mean, Yo' Honor?

PHARAOH I mean I'd like to make dose Hebrew chillun realize dat I kin be even mo' of a pest. I mean I hates dem chillun. An' I'm gonter think of a way of makin' 'em even mo' mizzable

HEAD MAGICIAN But dey ain't anythin' meaner dan killin' de babies, King

PHARAOH Dey must be sump'n. Dog-gone, you is my head tricker, you put yo' brains on it. *(To the others)* Quiet, whilst de Head Magician go into de silence

HEAD MAGICIAN *(after turning completely around twice, and a moment's cogitation)* I tell you what I kin do. All de Hebrews dat ain't out to de buryin' grounds or in de hospitals is laborn' in de brick wukks

PHARAOH Yeh?

HEAD MAGICIAN *(after a cackling laugh)* How would it be to take de straw away from 'em and tell 'em dey's got to turn out jest as many bricks as usual? Ain't dat nasty?

PHARAOH Purty triflin', but I s'pose it'll have to do for de time bein'. Where's de extreme inner guard? *(One of the military attendants comes forward)* Go on out an' tell de sup'intendent to put dat into ee-fect. *(The attendant bows and starts for*

the door He stops as PHARAOH calls to him) Wait a minute! Tell 'im to chop off de hands of anybody dat say he can't make de bricks dat way *(The attendant salutes and exits, the door being opened and closed by one of the SOLDIERS)* Now what's de news in de magic line?

HEAD MAGICIAN I ain't got very many novelties today, King. I bin wukkin' too hard on de killin's. I'm so tired I don't believe I could lift a wand *(There are murmurs of protest from the assemblage)*

PHARAOH Doggone, you was to 'a been de chief feature o' de meetin' dis mornin' Look at de turn-out you got account of me tellin' 'em you was comin'

HEAD MAGICIAN Well, dat's de way it is, King. Why don' you git de wizards to do some spell castin'?

PHARAOH Dey say it's in de cyards dat dey can't wukk till high noon *(He glances at the WIZARDS)* Think mebbe you kin cheat a little?

FIRST WIZARD Oh dat can't be done, King

PHARAOH Well, we might as well adjourn, den. Looks to me like de whole program's shot to pieces *(He starts to rise, when there is a furious banging on the door)* What's de idea, dere? See who dat is *(The SOLDIERS open the door. MOSES and AARON enter, pushing the two SOLDIERS aside and coming down in front of PHARAOH. The SOLDIERS are bewildered and PHARAOH is angry)* Say, who tol' you two baboons you could come in yere?

MOSES Is you ol' King Pharaoh?

PHARAOH Dat's me. Did you hear what I asked you?

MOSES My name is Moses, and dis is my brother Aaron *(Murmur of "Hebrews" spreads through the room)*

PHARAOH *(in a rage)* Is you Hebrews?

MOSES Yes, suh

PHARAOH *(almost screaming)* Put 'em to de sword!

(As the courtiers approach, AARON suddenly discloses the rod, which he swings once over his head. The courtiers draw back as if their hands had been stung. Cries of "Hey!" "Look out," etc.)

MOSES Keep outside dat circle. *(The courtiers nearest MOSES and AARON look at each other, exclaiming ad lib, "Did you feel dat?" "What is dat?" "What's goin' on heah?" "My hands is stingin'!" etc.)*

PHARAOH *(puzzled but threatening)* What's de idea yere?

MOSES We is magicians, ol' King Pharaoh

PHARAOH *(to the HEAD MAGICIAN)* Put a spell on 'em *(The HEAD MAGICIAN stands looking at them bewildered. To MOSES)* I got some magicians, too. We'll see who's got de bes' magic *(MOSES and AARON laugh. Most of the courtiers are cowering. To the HEAD MAGICIAN)* Go ahead, give 'em gri-gr

MOSES Sure, go ahead

PHARAOH *Hurry up, dey's laughin' at you* What's de matter?

HEAD MAGICIAN I can't think of de right spell

PHARAOH *(now frightened himself)* You mean dey got even you whupped?

HEAD MAGICIAN Dey's got a new kind of magic

PHARAOH *(gazes at HEAD MAGICIAN a moment, bewildered To the WIZARDS)* I s'pose if de Professor can't, you can't

FIRST WIZARD Dat's a new trick, King

HEAD MAGICIAN *(rubbing his fingers along his palms)* It's got 'lectricity in it!

PHARAOH Hm, well, dat may make it a little diff'rent So you boys is magicians, too?

MOSES Yes, suh

PHARAOH Well, we's always glad to see some new trickers in de co't, dat is if dey is good *(He glances about him)* You look like you is O K

MOSES Dat's what we claims, ol' King Pharaoh We think we's de best in de worl'

PHARAOH You certainly kin talk big Jest what is it you boys would like?

MOSES We came to show you some tricks Den we's goin' to ask you to do somethin' for us

PHARAOH Well, I s'pose you know I'm a fool for conjurin' If a man kin

show me some tricks I ain't seen, I goes out of my way to do him a favor

MOSES Dat's good Want to see de first trick?

PHARAOH It ain't goin' to hurt nobody?

MOSES Dis one won't

PHARAOH Go ahead

MOSES Dis yere rod my brother has looks jes' like a walkin' stick, don't it? *(The courtiers now join the King in interest)*

PHARAOH Uh huh Le's see *(AARON hands him the rod, which PHARAOH inspects and returns)*

MOSES Well, look what happens when he lays it on de groun' *(AARON places the rod on the second step of the throne It turns into a life-like snake There are exclamations from the assemblage)*

PHARAOH Dat's a good trick! Now turn it back into a walkin' stick again *(AARON picks it up and it is again a rod Exclamations of "Purty good!" "Dat's all right!" "What do you think of that!" etc.)* Say, you is good trickers!

MOSES You ain't never seen de beat of us Now I'm goin' to ask de favor

PHARAOH Sure, what is it?

MOSES *(solemnly)* Let de Hebrew chillun go!

PHARAOH *(rises and stares at them There is a murmur of "Listen to 'im!" "He's got nerve!" "I never in*

my lifel" "My goodness!" etc) What did you say?

MOSES Let de Hebrew chillun go (PHARAOH seats himself again)

PHARAOH (slowly) Don' you know de Hebrews is my slaves?

MOSES Yes, suh

PHARAOH Yes, suh, my slaves (There is a distant groaning) Listen, and you kin hear 'em bein' treated like slaves (He calls toward the window) What was dey doin' den?

MAN NEAR THE WINDOW Dey's jest gettin' de news down in de brick-yard

PHARAOH I won't let them go (He snorts contemptuously) Let's see another trick

MOSES Yes, suh, vere's a better one (He lowers his head) Let's have a plague of de flies (AARON raises the rod The room grows dark and a great buzzing of flies is heard The courtiers break out in cries of "Get away fum me!" "Take 'em away!" "De place is filled with flies!" "Dis is terrible!" "Do sump'n Pharaoh!")

PHARAOH (topping the others) All right—stop de trick!

MOSES Will you let de Hebrews go?

PHARAOH Sho' I will Go ahead stop it!

MOSES (also above the others) Begone! (The buzzing stops and the room is filled with light again, as AARON lowers the rod All except MOSES and

AARON are brushing the flies from their persons)

PHARAOH (laughing) Doggone, dat was a good trick! (The others, seeing they are uninjured, join in the laughter, with exclamations of "Dog gone!" "You all right?" "Sho' I'm all right" "Didn' hurt me," etc) You is good trickers

MOSES Will you let de Hebrew chillun go?

PHARAOH (sitting down again) Well, I'll tell you, boys I'll tell you sump'n you didn' know You take me, I'm a pretty good tricker, an' I jest outtricked you So, bein' de bes' tricker, I don't think I will let 'em go You got any mo' tricks yo'self?

MOSES Yes, suh Dis is a little harder one (AARON lifts the rod) Gnats in de mill pon', gnats in de clover, gnats in de tater patch, stingin' all over (The stage grows dark again There is the humming of gnats and the slapping of hands against faces and arms, and the same protests as were heard with the flies, but with more feeling "I'm guttin' stung to death!" "I'm all stung!" "Dey'r like hornets!" "Dey's on my face!" etc)

PHARAOH Take 'em away, Moses!

MOSES (his voice drowning the others) If I do, will you let 'em go?

PHARAOH Sho' I will, dis time

MOSES Do you mean it?

PHARAOH Co'se I mean it! Doggone, one just stang me on de nose

MOSES Begone! (Lights come up as AARON lowers the rod There is a

moment of general recovery again
 PHARAOH *rubs his nose, looks at his hands, etc., as do the others*) Now, how about it?

PHARAOH (*smiling*) Well, I'll tell you, Moses Now dat de trick's over—
 (MOSES takes a step toward PHARAOH)

MOSES Listen, Pharaoh You been lyin' to me, and I'm gittin' tired of it

PHARAOH I ain't lyin', I'm trickin', too You been trickin' me and I been trickin' you

MOSES I see Well, I got one mo' trick up my sleeve which I didn't aim to wukk unless I had to Caize when I does it, I can't undo it

PHARAOH Wukk it an' I'll trick you right back I don't say you ain't a good tricker, Moses You is one of de best I ever seen But I kin outtrick you Dat's all

MOSES It ain't only me dat's goin' to wukk dis trick It's me an' de Lawd

PHARAOH Who?

MOSES De Lawd God of Israel

PHARAOH I kin outtrick you an' de Lawd too!

MOSES (*angrily*) Now you done it, ol' King Pharaoh You been mean to de Lawd's people, and de Lawd's been easy on you caize you didn't know no better You been givin' me a lot of say-so and no do-so, and I didn't min' dat But now you've got to braggin' dat you's better dan de Lawd, and dat's too many

PHARAOH You talk like a preacher, an' I never did like to hear preachers talk

MOSES You ain't goin' to like it any better, when I strikes down de oldes' boy in every one of yo' people's houses

PHARAOH Now you've given up trickin' and is jest lyin' (*He rises*) Listen, I'm Pharaoh I do de strikin' down yere I strike down my enemies, and dere's no one in all Egypt kin kill who he wants to, 'ceptin' me

MOSES I'm sorry, Pharaoh Will you let de Hebrews go?

PHARAOH You heard my word (*AARON is lifting his rod again at a signal from MOSES*) Now, no more tricks or I'll—

MOSES Oh, Lawd, you'll have to do it, I guess Aaron, lift de rod (*There is a thunderclap, darkness and screams The lights go up Several of the younger men on the stage have fallen to the ground or are being held in the arms of the horrified elders*)

PHARAOH What have you done yere? Where's my boy?
 (*Through the door come four MEN bearing a young man's body*)

FIRST OF THE FOUR MEN King Pharaoh
 (*PHARAOH drops into his chair, stunned, as the dead boy is brought to the throne*)

PHARAOH (*grief-stricken*) Oh, my son, my fine son
 (*The courtiers look at him with mute appeal*)

MOSES. I'm sorry, Pharaoh, but you can't fight de Lawd Will you let his people go?

PHARAOH Let them go
(The lights go out The CHOIR begins, "Mary Don't You Weep," and

continues until it is broken by the strains of "I'm Noways Weary and I'm Noways Tired" The latter is sung by many more voices than the former, and the cacophony ends as the latter grows in volume and the lights go up on the next scene)

SCENE IV

The CHILDREN OF ISRAEL are marching on the treadmill and now singing fortissimo They are of all ages and most of them are ragged The men have packs on their shoulders, one or two have hand carts The line stretches across the stage It is nearing twilight, and the faces of the assemblage are illumined by the rays of the late afternoon sun The upper treadmill carries a gradually rising and falling middle distance past the marchers The foot of a mountain appears, a trumpet call is heard as the foot of the mountain reaches stage center The marchers halt The picture now shows the mountain running up out of sight off right The singing stops A babel of "What's de matter?" "Why do we stop?" "I ain't sundown yet!" "What's happened?" "What's goin' on?" "What are they blowin' for?" etc Those looking ahead begin to murmur "It's Moses," "Moses" "What's happened to him?" The others take up the repetition of "Moses," and MOSES enters, on the arm of AARON He is now an old man as is his brother, and he totters toward the center of the stage Cries of "What's de matter, Moses?" "You ain't hurt, is you?" "Ain't that too bad?" etc He slowly seats himself on the rock at the foot of the mountain

AARON How you feelin' now, brother?

MOSES I'm so weary, Aaron Seems like I was took all of a sudden

AARON Do we camp yere?

MOSES (pathetically) No, you got to keep goin'

AARON But you can't go no further tonight, brother

MOSES Dis never happened to me befo'

A YOUNG WOMAN But you's a ol' man, now, Father Moses You can't expect to go as fas' as we kin

MOSES But de Lawd said I'd do it. He said I was to show you de Promised Land Fo'ty years I bin leadin' you I led you out o' Egypt I led you past Sinai, and through de wilderness Oh, I can't fall down on you now!

AARON Le's res' yere fo de night Den we'll see how you feel in de mo'nin'

MOSES We tol' de scouts we'd meet 'em three miles further on I hate fo' 'em to come back all dis way to report 'Tis gettin' a little dark, ain't it?

AARON It ain't dark, Brother

MOSES No, it's my eyes

AARON Maybe it's de dust

MOSES No, I jest cain't seem to see Oh, Lawd, dey cain't have a blind man leadin' 'em! Where is you, Aaron?

AARON I'se right yere, Moses

MOSES Do you think— (Pause) Oh! Do you think it's de time He said?

AARON How you mean, Moses? (Crowd look from one to another in wonder)

MOSES He said I could lead 'em to de Jordan, dat I'd see de Promised Land, and dat's all de further I could go on account I broke de laws Little while bick I thought I did see a river ahead, and a pretty land on de other side (Distant shouts "Hooray!" "Yere dey are!" "Dey travelled quick" etc) Where's de young leader of de troops? Where's Joshua? (The call "Joshua" is taken up by those on the right of the stage, followed almost immediately by "Yere he is!" "Moses wants you!" etc JOSHUA enters He is a fine-looking Negro of about thirty)

JOSHUA (going to MOSES' side) Yes, suh

MOSES What's de shoutin' 'bout, Joshua?

JOSHUA De scouts is back wid de news De Jordan is right ahead of us, and Jericho is jest on de other side Moses, we're dere! (There are cries of "Hallelujah!" "De Lawd be praised!" "Hooray!" "De Kingdom's comin'!" etc With a considerable stir among the marchers, several new arrivals crowd in from right, shouting, "Moses, we're dere!" JOSHUA seeing the newcomers) Yere's de scouts!

(Three very ragged and dusty young men advance to MOSES)

MOSES (as the shouting dies) So it's de River Jordan!

FIRST SCOUT Yes, suh

MOSES All we got to take is de city of Jericho

FIRST SCOUT Yes, suh

MOSES Joshua, you got to take charge of de fightin' men, an' Aaron's gotta stay by de priests

JOSHUA What about you?

MOSES You are leavin' me behind Joshua, you gonter get de fightin' men together and take dat city befo' sundown

JOSHUA It's a big city, Moses, wid walls all 'round it We ain't got enough men

MOSES You'll take it, Joshua

JOSHUA Yes, suh, but how?

MOSES Move up to de walls wid our people Tell de priests to go wid you with de rams' horns You start marchin' 'roun' dem walls, and den—

JOSHUA Yes, sub

MOSES De Lawd'll take charge, jest as he's took charge ev'y time I've led you against a city He ain't never failed, has he?

SEVERAL VOICES No, Moses
(All raise their heads)

MOSES And he ain't goin' to fail us now (He prays All bow) Oh, Lawd, I'm turnin' over our brave young men to you, caize I know you don't want me to lead 'em any further (Rises) Jest like you said, I've got to de Jordan but I can't git over it An' yere dey goin' now to take de city of Jericho In a little while dey'll be marchin' 'roun' it An' would you please be so good as to tell 'em what to do? Amen (To JOSHUA) Go ahead Ev'ybody follows Joshua now Give de signal to move on wid ev'ything (A trumpet is heard) You camp fo' de night in de city of Jericho (MOSES seats himself on the rock)

JOSHUA Can't we help you, Moses?

MOSES You go ahead De Lawd's got his plans fo' me Soun de signal to march (Another trumpet call is heard The company starts marching off AARON lingers a moment) Take care of de Ark of de Covenant, Aaron

AARON Yes, Brother Good-bye

MOSES Good-bye, Aaron (The singing is resumed softly and dies away The last of the marchers has disappeared) Yere I is, Lawd De chillun is goin' into de Promised Land (God enters from behind the hill He walks to MOSES, puts his hands on his shoulders) You's with me, ain't you, Lawd?

GOD Co'se I is

MOSES Guess I'm through, Lawd Jest like you said I'd be, when I broke de tablets of de law De ol machine's broke down

GOD Jest what was it I said to you, Moses? Do you remember?

MOSES You said I couldn't go into de Promised Land

GOD Dat's so But dat ain't all dey was to it

MOSES How you mean, Lawd?

GOD Moses, you been a good man You been a good leader of my people You got me angry once, dat's true And when you anger me I'm a God of Wrath But I never meant you wasn't gonter have what w is comin' to you An' I ain't goin' to do you out of it, Moses It's jest de country acrost de River dat you ain't gonter enter You gonter have a Promised Land I been gettin' it ready fo' you, fo' a long time Kin you stind up?

MOSES (singing with God's help)
Yes, sub, Lawd

GOD Come on, I'm goin' to show it to you We goin' up dis hill to see it Moses, it's a million times nicer dan de Land of Canaan
(They start up the hill)

MOSES I can't hardly see

GOD Don't worry Dat's jest caize you so old
(They take a step or two up the hill, when MOSES stops suddenly)

MOSES Oh!

GOD What's de matter?

MOSES We can't be doin' dis!

GOD Co'se we kin!

MOSES But I fo'got! I fo'got about Joshua and de fightin' men!

GOD How about 'em?

MOSES Dey're marchin' on Jencho I tol' 'em to march aroun' de walls and den de Lawd would be dere to tell 'em what to do

GOD Dat's all right He's dere

MOSES Den who's dis helpin' me up de hill?

GOD Yo' faith, yo' God

MOSES And is you over dere helpin' them too, Lawd? Is you goin' to tell dem poor chillun what to do?

GOD Co'se I is Listen, Moses, I'll show you how I'm helpin' dem

(From the distance comes the blast of the rams' horns, the sound of crumbling walls, a roar, and a moment's silence. The CHOIR begins "Joshua Fit De Battle of Jericho" and continues through the rest of the scene.)

MOSES You did it, Lawd! You've taken it! Listen to de chillun—dey's in de Land of Canaan at last! You's de only God dey ever was, ain't you, Lawd?

GOD *(quietly)* Come on, ol' man *(They continue up the hill. The stage is darkened.)*

MR DESHEE *(in the dark)* But even dat scheme didn' work. Caize after dey got into the Land of Canaan dey went to de dogs again. And dey went into bondage again. Only dis time it was in de city of Babylon. *(The CHOIR, which has been singing "Can't Stay Away," stops as the next scene begins.)*

SCENE V

Under a low ceiling is a room vaguely resembling a Negro night club in New Orleans. Two or three long tables run across the room, and on the left is a table on a dais with a gaudy canopy above it. The table bears a card marked "Reserved for King and guests."

Flashy young men and women are seated at the tables. About a dozen couples are dancing in the foreground to the tune of a jazz orchestra. The costumes are what would be worn at a Negro masquerade to represent the debauchees of Babylon.

FIRST MAN When did yuh git to Babylon?

THIRD MAN *(dancing)* How do you like dis babv, Joe?

SECOND MAN I jes' got in yesterday

FOURTH MAN Hot damn! She could be de King's pet!

A WOMAN Anybody seen my papa?

THIRD MAN Don' fo'git de dance at de High Priest's house tomorrow (The dance stops as a bugle call is heard Enter MASTER OF CEREMONIES)

MASTER OF CEREMONIES Stop! To-night's guest of honor, de King of Babylon an' party of five (Enter the KING and five GIRLS The KING has on an imitation ermine cloak over his conventional evening clothes and wears a diamond tiara All rise as the KING enters, and sing, "Hail, de King of Bab—Bab—Babylon")

KING Wait till you see de swell table I got (He crosses the stage to his table The GIRLS are jabbering) Remind me to send you a peck of rubies in de mo'nin'

MASTER OF CEREMONIES Ev'nin', King!

KING Good ev'nin' How's de party goin'?

MASTER OF CEREMONIES Bes' one we ever had in Babylon, King

KING Any Jew boys yere?

MASTER OF CEREMONIES (indicating some of the others) Lot o' dem yere I kin go git mo' if you want 'em

KING I was really refernin' to de High Priest He's a 'nclar frien' o' mine an' he might drop in You know what he look like?

MASTER OF CEREMONIES No, suh, but I'll be on de look-out fo' him

KING O K Now le's have a li'l good time

MASTER OF CEREMONIES Yes, suh (To the orchestra) Let 'er go, boys (The music begins, waiters appear with food and great urns painted gold and silver, from which they pour out wine for the guests The MASTER OF CEREMONIES exits The KING's dancing-girls go to the middle of the floor, and start to dance The KING puts his arms about the waists of two GIRLS, and draws them to him)

KING Hot damn! Da's de way! Let de Jew boys see our gals kin dance better'n deres (There is an ad lib babel of "Da's de truth, King!" "I don' know—we got some good gals, too!" etc) Dey ain' nobody in de worl' like de Babylon gals (The dancing grows faster, the watchers keep time with hand-claps The door at the left opens suddenly, and the PROPHET, a patriarchal, ragged figure, enters He looks beligerently about the room, and is followed almost immediately by the MASTER OF CEREMONIES)

PROPHET Stop! (The music and the dancers halt)

KING What's de ideo, bustin' up my party?

MASTER OF CEREMONIES He said he was expected, King I thought mebbe he was de—

KING Did you think he was de High Priest of de Hebrews? Why, he's jest an ol' bum! De High Priest is a fashion plate T'row dis ole bum out o' yere!

PROPHET Stop! (Those who have been advancing to seize him stop, somewhat amused)

KING Wait a minute Don't throw him out Let's see what he has to say

PROPHET Listen to me, King of Babylon! I've been sent yere by de Lawd God Jehovah. Don't you dare lay a hand on de Prophet!

KING Oh, you're a prophet, is yuh? Well, you know we don't keer much fo' prophets in dis part of de country.

PROPHET Listen to me, sons and daughters of Babylon! Listen, you children of Israel dat's given yo'-selves over to de evil ways of yo' oppressors! You're all wallowin' like hogs in sin, an' de wrath of Gawd ain't goin' to be held back much longer! I'm tellin' you, repent befo' it's too late. Repent befo' Jehovah casts down de same fire dat burned up Sodom and Gomorrah. Repent befo' de— *(During this scene yells increase as the PROPHET continues. The HIGH PRIEST enters left. He is a fat voluptuary, elaborately clothed in brightly-colored robes. He walks in hand in hand with a gaudily dressed "chippy")*

HIGH PRIEST *(noise stops)* Whoa, dere! Whut you botherin' de King fo'?

PROPHET *(wheeling)* And you, de High Priest of all Israel, walkin' de town wid a dirty lil tramp.

KING Seems to be a frien' o' yours, Jake.

HIGH PRIEST *(crossing to the KING with his girl)* Aw, he's one of dem wild men, like Jeremiah and Isaiah. Don't let him bother you none. *(Pushes PROPHET aside and goes to KING's table)*

PROPHET You consort with harlots, an' vo' pollution in the sight of de Lawd. De Lawd God's goin' to smite

you down, jest as he's goin' to smite down all dis wicked world! *(Grabs HIGH PRIEST and turns him around)*

KING *(angrily against the last part of the preceding speech)* Wait a minute. I'm getting tired of dis. Don't throw him out. Jest kill him! *(There is the sound of a shot. The PROPHET falls.)*

PROPHET Smite 'em down, Lawd, like you said. Dey ain't a decent person left in de whole world. *(He dies. MASTER OF CEREMONIES, revolver in hand, looks down at the PROPHET.)*

MASTER OF CEREMONIES He's dead, King.

KING Some of you boys take him out. *(A couple of young men come from the background and walk off with the body.)*

HIGH PRIEST Don't know whether you should a done that, King.

KING Why not?

HIGH PRIEST I don't know whether de Lawd would like it.

KING Now listen, Jake. You know yo' Lawd ain't payin' much attention to dis man's town. Except fo' you boys, it's tho't protected by de Gawds o' Babylon.

HIGH PRIEST I know, but jest de same—

KING Look yere, s'pose I give you a couple hundred pieces of silver. Don't you s'pose you kin arrange to persuade yo' Gawd to keep his hands off?

HIGH PRIEST *(oily)* Well of co'se we could try. I dunno how well it would work. *(As the HIGH PRIEST*

speaks, the KING claps his hands
MASTER OF CEREMONIES enters with
bag of money)

KING Yere it is

HIGH PRIEST (*smiling*) I guess we kin square things up (*He prays—whimply*) Oh Lawd, please forgive my po' frenen' de King o' Babylon He didn't know what he was doin' an—

(*There is a clap of thunder, darkness for a second The lights go up and GOD is standing in the center of the room*)

GOD (*in a voice of doom*) Dat's about enough (*The guests are horrified*) I've stood all I kin from you I tried to make dis a good earth I helped Adam, I helped Noah, I helped Moses, an' I helped David What's de grain dat grew out of de seed? Sin! Nothin' but sin through-out de whole world I've given you

ev'y chance I sent you warriors and prophets I've given you laws and commandments, an' you betrayed my trust Ev'ything I've given you, you've defiled Ev'y time I've forgiven you, you've mocked me An' now de High Priest of Israel tries to trille wid my name Listen, you chillun of darkness, yo' Lawd is tired I'm tired of de struggle to make you worthy of de breath I gave you I put you in bondage ag'in to cure you an' yo' worse dan you was amongst de flesh pots of Egypt So I renounce you Listen to the words of yo' Lawd God Jehovah, for dey is de last words yo' ever hear from me I repent of dese people dat I have made and I will deliver dem no more

(*There is darkness and cries of "Mercy!" "Have pity, Lawd!" "We didn' mean it, Lawd!" "Forgive us, Lawd!" etc The chorus sings "Death's Gwimeter Lay His Cold Icy Hands On Me" until the lights go up on the next scene*)

SCENE VI

GOD is v'riting at his desk Outside, past the door, goes **HOSEA**, a dignified old man with wings like **JACOB's** **GOD**, sensing his presence, looks up from the paper he is examining, and follows him out of the corner of his eye Angerily he resumes his work as soon as **HOSEA** is out of sight There is a knock on the door

GOD Who is it?
 (**GABRIEL enters**)

GABRIEL It's de delegation, Lawd

GOD (*wearily*) Tell 'em to come in (**ABRAHAM, ISAAC, JACOB, and MOSES enter**) Good mo'nin', gen'lemen

THE VISITORS Good mo'nin', Lawd

GOD What kin I do for you?

MOSES You know, Lawd Go back to our people

GOD (*shaking his head*) Ev'y dav fo' hund'eds of years you boys have come in to ask dat same thing De answer is still de same I repented of de people I made I said I would de-

liver dem no more. Good mo'nin', gen'lemen (*The four VISITORS rise and exeunt GABRIEL remains*) Gabe, why do dey do it?

GABRIEL I 'spect dey think you gonter change yo' mind

GOD (*sadly*) Dey don' know me (*HOSEA again passes the door His shadow shows on wall GABRIEL is perplexed, as he watches GOD again looks surreptitiously over His shoulder at the passing figure*) I don' like dat, either

GABRIEL What, Lawd?

GOD Dat man

GABRIEL He's jest a prophet, Lawd Dat's jest old Hosea He jest come up the other day

GOD I know He's one of de few dat's come up yere since I was on de earth last time

GABRIEL Ain' been annoyin' you, has he?

GOD I don' like him walkin' past de door

GABRIEL All you got to do is tell him to stop, Lawd

GOD Yes, I know I don' want to tell him He's got a right up yere or he wouldn't be yere

GABRIEL You needn' be bothered by him hangin' aroun' de office all de time I'll tell 'im Who's he think he—

GOD No, Gabe I find it ain't in me to stop him I sometimes jest wonder why he don' come in and say hello.

GABRIEL You want him to do dat? (*He moves as if to go to the door*)

GOD He never has spoke to me, and if he don' wanta come in, I ain't gonter make him But dat ain't de worst of it, Gabriel

GABRIEL What is, Lawd?

GOD Ev'y time he goes past de door I hears a voice

GABRIEL One of de angels?

GOD (*shaking his head*) It's from de earth It's a man

GABRIEL You mean he's prayin'?

GOD No, he ain't exactly prayin' He's jest talkin' in such a way dat I got to listen His name is Hezdrel

GABRIEL Is he on de books?

GOD No, not yet But ev'y time dat Hosea goes past I hear dat voice

GABRIEL Den tell it to stop

GOD I find I don' want to do that, either Dey s gettin' ready to take Jerusalem down dere Dat was my big fine city Dis Hezdrel, he's jest one of de defenders (*Suddenly and passionately, almost wildly*) I ain't comin' down You hear me? I ain't comin' down (*He looks at GABRIEL*) Go ahead, Gabriel 'Tend to yo' chores I'm gonter keep wukkin' yere

GABRIEL I hates to see you feelin' like dis, Lawd

GOD Dat's all right Even bein' Gawd ain't a bed of roses (*GABRIEL exits HOSEA's shadow is on the wall.*)

For a second HOSEA *hesitates* GOD *looks at the wall* Goes to window) I hear you I know yo' fightin' bravely, but I ain't comin' down Oh, why don' you leave me alone? You know you ain't talkin' to me Is you talkin' to me? I can't stand yo' talkin' dat way I kin only hear part of what yo' sayin', and it puzzles me Don' you know you can't puzzle God? *(A pause Then tenderly)* Do you want me to come down dere ve'y much? You know I said I wouldn't come down? *(Fiercely)* Why don'

he answer me a little? *(With clenched fists, looks down through the window)* Listen! I'll tell you what I'll do I ain't goin' to promise you anythin', and I ain't goin' to do nothin' to help you I'm jest feelin' a little low, an' I'm only comin' down to make myself feel a little better, dat's all

(The stage is darkened CHOIR begins "A Blind Man Stood In De Middle of De Road," and continues until the lights go up on the next scene)

SCENE VII

It is a shadowed corner beside the walls of the temple in Jerusalem The light of campfires flickers on the figure of HEZDREL, who was ADAM in Part I He stands in the same position ADAM held when first discovered but in his right hand is a sword, and his left is in a sling Around him are several prostrate bodies Pistol and cannon shots, then a trumpet call Six YOUNG MEN enter from left in command of a CORPORAL They are all armed

CORPORAL De fightin's stopped fo' de night, Hezdrel

HEZDREL Yes?

CORPORAL Dey're goin' to begin ag'in at cockcrow *(MAN enters, crosses the stage and exits)* Herod sav he's goin' to take de temple to-morrow, burn de books and de Ark of de Covenant, and put us all to de sword

HEZDREL Yo' ready, ain't you?

EVERYBODY Yes, Hezdrel

HEZDREL Did de food get in through de hole in de city wall?
(Two SOLDIERS enter, cross the stage and exit)

CORPORAL Yessuh, we's goin' back to pass it out now

HEZDREL Good Any mo' of our peo-
ple escape today?

CORPORAL Ol' Herod's got de ol' hole covered up now, but fifteen of our people got out a new one we made
(Other SOLDIERS enter, cross the stage and exit)

HEZDREL Good Take dese yere wounded men back and git 'em took care of

CORPORAL Yes, suh
(They pick up the bodies on the ground and carry them offstage as HEZDREL speaks)

HEZDREL So dey gonter take de temple in de mo'nin'? We'll be waitin' for 'em Jest remember, boys, when dey kill us we leap out of our skins, right into de lap of God
(*The men disappear with the wounded, from the deep shadow upstage comes GOD*)

GOD Hello, Hezdrel—Adam

HEZDREL (*rubbing his forehead*) Who is you?

GOD Me? I'm jest an ol' preacher, from back in de hills

HEZDREL What you doin' yere?

GOD I heard you boys was fightin' I jest wanted to see how it was goin'

HEZDREL Well, it ain't goin' so well

GOD Dey got you skeered, huh?

HEZDREL Look yere, who is you, a spy in my brain?

GOD Cain't you see I'se one of yo' people?

HEZDREL Listen, Preacher, we ain't skeered We's gonter be killed, but we ain't skeered

GOD I'se glad to hear dat Kin I ask you a question, Hezdrel?

HEZDREL What is it?

GOD How is it you is so brave?

HEZDREL Caize we got faith, dat's why!

GOD Faith? In who?

HEZDREL In our dear Lawd God

GOD But God say he abandoned ev' one down yere

HEZDREL Who say dat? Who dare say dat of de Lawd God of Hosea?

GOD De God of Hosea?

HEZDREL You heard me Look yere, you is a spy in my brain!

GOD No, I ain't, I Hezdrel I'm jest puzzled You ought to know dat

HEZDREL How come you so puzzled 'bout de God of Hosea?

GOD I don' know Maybe I jest don' hear things You see, I live 'way back in de hills

HEZDREL What you wanten find out?

GOD Ain't de God of Hosea de same Jehovah dat was de God of Moses?

HEZDREL (*contemptuously*) No Dat ol' God of wrath and vengeance? We have de God dat Hosea preached to us He's de one God

GOD Who's he?

HEZDREL (*reverently*) De God of mercy

GOD Hezdrel, don' you think dey must be de same God?

HEZDREL I don' know I ain't bothered to think much about it Maybe dey is Maybe our God is de same ol' God I guess we jest got tired of his appearance dat ol' way

GOD What you mean, Hezdrel?

HEZDREL Oh, dat ol' God dat walked de earth in de shape of a man I

guess he lived wid man so much dat
all he seen was de sins in man Dat's
what made him de God of wrath and
vengeance Co'se he made Hosea
An' Hosea never would a found
what mercy was unless dere was a
liddle of it in God, too Anyway, he
ain't a fearsome God no mo' Hosea
showed us dat

GOD How you s'pose Hosea found
dat mercy?

HEZDREL De only way he could find
it De only way I found it De only
way anyone kin find it

GOD How's dat?

HEZDREL Through sufferin'

GOD (after a pause) What if dey
kill you in de mo'nin', Hezdrel

HEZDREL If dey do, dey do Dat's
all

GOD Herod say he's goin' to burn
de temple—

HEZDREL So he say

GOD And burn de Ark an' de books
Den dat's de end of de books, ain't
it?

HEZDREL (buoyantly) What you
mean? If he burns dem things in
dere? Naw Dem's jest copies

GOD Where is de others?

HEZDREL (tapping his head) Dey's
a set in yere Fifteen got out through
de hole in the city wall today A hun-
dred and fifty got out durn' de week
Each of 'em is a set of de books
Dey's scattered safe all over de coun-
tryside now, jest waitin' to git pen
and paper fo' to put 'em down ag'in.

GOD (proudly) Dey can't lick you,
kin dey, Hezdrel?

HEZDREL (smiling) I know dey
cain't (Trumpet) You better get
out o' yere, Preacher, if you want
carry de news to yo' people It'll soon
be daylight

GOD I'm goin' (He takes a step up-
stage and stops) Want me to tak
any message?

HEZDREL Tell de people in de hills
dey ain't nobody like de Lawd God
of Hosea

GOD I will If dey kill you tomorrow
I'll bet dat God of Hosea'll be wait-
in' for you

HEZDREL I know he will

GOD (quietly) Thank you, Hezdrel

HEZDREL Fo' what?

GOD Fo' tellin' me so much You see
I been so far away, I guess I was jest
way behin' de times (He exits
Pause, then trumpet sounds)
(HEZDREL paces back and forth once
or twice Another young SOLDIER ap-
pears Other men enter and stand
grouped about HEZDREL)

SECOND OFFICER (excitedly) De
cock's jest crowed, Hezdrel Dey
started de fightin' ag'in

HEZDREL We's ready fo' 'em Come
on, boys (From the darkness up-
stage comes another group of sol-
diers) Dis is de day dey say dey'll
git us Le's fight till de last man goes
What d'you say?

CORPORAL Le's go, Hezdrel!

HEZDREL (calling left) Give 'em
ev'rything, boys!
(There is a movement toward the

left, a bugle call and the sound of distant battle The lights go out The CHOIR is heard singing, "March On," triumphantly They continue to sing after the lights go up on the next scene)

SCENE VIII

It is the same setting as the Fish Fry Scene in Part I. The same angels are present but the CHOIR, instead of marching, is standing in a double row on an angle upstage right GOD is seated in an armchair near center He faces the audience As the CHOIR continues to sing, GABRIEL enters, unnoticed by the chattering angels He looks at GOD who is staring thoughtfully toward the audience

GABRIEL You look a little pensive, Lawd (GOD nods his head) Have a teegar, Lawd?

GOD No thanks, Gabriel
(GABRIEL goes to the table, accepts a cup of custard, chats with the angel behind the table for a moment as he sips, puts the cup down and returns to the side of GOD)

GABRIEL You look awful pensive, Lawd You been sittin' yere, lookin' dis way, an awful long time Is it somethin' serious, Lawd?

GOD Very serious, Gabriel

GABRIEL (awed by His tone) Lawd, is de time come for me to blow?

GOD Not yet, Gabriel I'm just thinkin'

GABRIEL What about, Lawd? (Puts up hand Singing stops)

GOD 'Bout somethin' de boy tol' me Somethin' 'bout Hosea, and himself How dey foun' somethin'

GABRIEL What, Lawd?

GOD Mercy (A pause) Through sufferin', he said

GABRIEL Yes, Lawd

GOD I'm tryin' to find it, too I's awful impo'tant It's awful impo'tant to all de people on my earth Did he mean dat even God must suffer? (GOD continues to look out over the audience for a moment and then a look of surprise comes into his face He sighs In the distance a voice cries)

THE VOICE Oh, look at him! Oh, look, dey goin' to make him carry it up dat high hill! Dey goin' to nail him to it! Oh, dat's a terrible burden for one man to carry!

(GOD rises and murmurs "Yes!" as if in recognition The heavenly beings have been watching him closely, and now, seeing him smile gently, draw back, relieved All the angels burst into "Hallelujah, King Jesus" GOD continues to smile as the lights fade away The singing becomes fortissimo)

CURTAIN

Biography

BY S. N. BEHRMAN

FOR
SONYA AND CARL

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Biography was first produced at the Guild Theatre, New York City, by the Theatre Guild, on December 12, 1932, and closed on July 29, 1933. Following is the original cast

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| RICHARD KURT | Earle Larimore |
| MINNIE, <i>Murion Froude's maid</i> | Helen Salinger |
| MELCHIOR FEYDAK, <i>a Viennese composer</i> | Arnold Korff |
| MARION FROUDE | Ina Clane |
| LEANDER NOLAN | Jay Fassett |
| WARWICK WILSON | Alexander Clark |
| ORREN KINNICOTT | Charles Richman |
| SLADE KINNICOTT, <i>his daughter</i> | Mary Arbenz |

Production directed by Philip Moeller

Setting designed by Jo Mielziner

SCENES

The entire action takes place in Marion Froude's studio in New York City.
The time is 1932

ACT ONE

About five o'clock of an afternoon in November

ACT TWO

Afternoon, three weeks later

ACT THREE

Late afternoon, two weeks later

The curtain is lowered during the act to denote a lapse of time

BIOGRAPHY

ACT ONE

SCENE—The studio apartment of MARION FROUDE in an old-fashioned studio building in West 57th St., New York. A great, cavernous room expressing in its polyglot furnishings the artistic patois of the various landlords who have sublet this apartment to wandering tenants like MARION FROUDE. The styles range from medieval Florence to contemporary Grand Rapids, on a movable raised platform in the center is a papal throne chair in red velvet and gold fringes. Not far from it is an ordinary American kitchen chair. The hanging lamp which sheds a mellow light over a French Empire sofa is filigreed copper Byzantine. Another and longer sofa across the room against the grand piano is in soft green velvet and has the gentility of a polite Park Avenue drawing room. Under the stairs, rear, which go up to MARION's bedroom, are stacks of her canvases. There is a quite fine wood carving of a Madonna which seems to be centuries old and in the wall spaces looking at audience are great, dim canvases—copies by some former tenant left probably in lieu of rent—of Sargenti's Lord Ribblesdale and Mme. X.

Whether it is due to the amenable spirit of the present incumbent or because they are relaxed in the democracy of art, these oddments of the creative spirit do not suggest disharmony. The room is warm, musty, with restful shadows and limpid lights. The enormous leaded window on the right, though some of its members are patched and cracked, gleams in the descending twilight with an opalescent light, even the copper cylinder of the fire extinguisher and its attendant axe, visible in the hall, seem to be not so much implements against calamity, as amusing museum-bits cherished from an earlier time. Every school is represented here except the modern. The studio has the mellowness of anachronism.

There is a door upstage left leading to the kitchen and MINNIE's bedroom, a door, center, under the stairs leads into hallway. A door on the stair landing, center, leads to MARION's bedroom.

TIME—About five o'clock of an afternoon in November.

AT RISE—RICHARD KURT is finishing a nervous cigarette. He has the essential audacity which comes from having seen the worst happen, from having endured the keenest pain. He has the hardness of one who knows that he can be devastated by pity, the bitterness which comes from having seen, in early youth, justice thwarted and tears unavailing, the self-reliance which comes from having seen everything go in a disordered world save one stubborn, unyielding core of belief—at everything else he laughs, in this alone he trusts. He has the intensity of the fanatic and the carelessness of the vagabond. He goes to the door from the hall and calls.

KURT Say, you, hello there—what's your name?

(MINNIE, MARION FROUDE's inseparable maid, a German woman of about fifty, comes in. She is indignant at being thus summarily summoned, and by a stranger.)

MINNIE (with dignity) My name iss Minnie, if you please

KURT What time did Miss Froude go out?

MINNIE About two o'clock

KURT It's nearly five now. She should be home, shouldn't she?

MINNIE She said she was coming home to tea and that iss all I know

KURT (grimly) I know. She invited me to tea. Where did she go to lunch?

MINNIE (acidly) That I do not know

KURT Did someone call for her or did she go out alone? I have a reason for asking

MINNIE She went out alone. Any more questions?

KURT No. I see there's no point in asking you questions

MINNIE Den vy do you ask dem? (The doorbell rings. MINNIE throws up her hands in despair. She goes out muttering "Ach Gott.") KURT is rather amused at her. He lights another cigarette.)

(Sounds of vociferous greeting outside. "Ach mein lieber Herr Feydak" MELCHIOR FEYDAK, the Austrian composer, comes in. He is

forty-five, tall, hook-nosed, thin-faced, a humorist with a rather sad face.)

FEYDAK Nun, Minnie, und wo iss die schlechte? (MINNIE makes a sign to him not to disclose their free-masonry in the presence of strangers. She is cautious.) Not home yet, eh, Minnie? Where is she? Well—well. How do they say—gallivanting—I love that word—gallivanting as usual. Well, I'll wait. It's humiliating—but I'll wait. Chilly! Brr! I don't mind so much being cold in London or Vienna. I expect it. But I can't stand it in New York. (He warms himself before fire.) And who is this young man?

MINNIE (shortly) Ich weiss nicht! Er hat alle funf minuten gefragt wo sie ist— (She goes out.)

FEYDAK You've offended Minnie, I can see that

KURT That's just too bad!

FEYDAK We all tremble before Minnie. Been waiting long?

KURT Over half an hour!

FEYDAK Extraordinary thing—ever since I've known Marion there's always been someone waiting for her. There are two kinds of people in one's life—people whom one keeps waiting—and the people for whom one waits

KURT Is that an epigram?

FEYDAK Do you object to epigrams?

KURT (with some pride) I despise epigrams

FEYDAK (*tolerantly sizing kurt up*)
Hm! Friend of Miss Froude's?

KURT Not at all

FEYDAK That at least is no cause for
pride

KURT I just don't happen to be, that's
all

FEYDAK I commiserate you

KURT I despise gallantry also

FEYDAK (*highly*) And I thought
Americans were so sentimental

KURT And, together with other
forms of glibness, I loathe generali-
zation

FEYDAK (*dryly*) Young man, we
have a great deal in common

KURT Also, there is a faint flavor of
condescension in the way you say
"young man" for which I don't really
care

FEYDAK (*delighted and encouraging
him to go on*) What about me do
you like? There must be something

KURT If I were that kind your ques-
tion would embarrass me

FEYDAK (*very pleased*) Good for
Marion!

KURT Why do you say that?

FEYDAK She always had a knack for
picking up originals!

KURT You are under a misappre-
hension Miss Froude did not pick
me up I picked her up (FEYDAK
stares at him This does shock him)

I wrote Miss Froude a letter—a busi-
ness-letter She answered and gave
me an appointment for four-thirty
It is now after five She has taken a
half-hour out of my life

FEYDAK I gather that fragment of
time has great value

KURT She has shortened my life by
thirty minutes God, how I hate Bo-
hemians!

FEYDAK (*innocently*) Are you by
any chance—an Evangelist?

KURT I am—for the moment—a busi-
nessman I'm not here to hold hands
or drink tea I'm here on business
My presence here is a favor to Miss
Froude and likely to bring her a
handsome profit

FEYDAK Profit! Ah! That accounts
for her being late

KURT (*sceptically*) You despise
profit, I suppose! Are you—by any
chance—old-world?

FEYDAK Young man, your technique
is entirely wasted on me

KURT Technique! What are you
talking about?

FEYDAK When I was a young man
—before I achieved any sort of suc-
cess—I was rude on principle De-
liberately rude and extravagantly
bitter in order to make impression
When it is no longer necessary for
you to wait around for people in
order to do them favors you'll mellow
down, I assure you

KURT (*fiercely, he has been
touched*) You think so, do you!
That's where you're mistaken! I'm

inde now When I'm successful I'll be murderous!

FEYDAK (*genially*) More power to you! But I've never seen it happen yet Success is the great muffler! Not an epigram, I hope If it is—forgive me

(*A moment's pause KURT studies him while FEYDAK crosses to stove and warms his hands*)

KURT I know you from somewhere It's very tantalising

FEYDAK I don't think so I have only just arrived in this country

KURT Still I know you—I'm sure—I've seen you somewhere

FEYDAK (*understanding the familiarity*) Maybe you know Miss Froude's portrait of me

KURT (*doubtfully*) Yes—maybe that's it may I ask ?

FEYDAK Certainly My name is Feydak

KURT The composer?

FEYDAK (*drily*) Yes

KURT I thought he was dead

FEYDAK That is true But I hope you won't tell anyone—for I am his ghost

KURT (*putting this down for Continental humor and genuinely contrite*) Forgive me

FEYDAK But why?

KURT If you really are Feydak the composer—I have the most enormous admiration for you I worship music above everything

FEYDAK (*slightly bored*) Go on . . .

KURT I read in the paper—you're on your way to Hollywood

FEYDAK Yes I am on my way to Hollywood

KURT In the new state men like you won't have to prostitute themselves in Hollywood

FEYDAK Ah! A Utopian!

KURT Yes You use the word as a term of contempt Why? Every artist is a Utopian You must be very tired or you wouldn't be so contemptuous of Utopians

FEYDAK (*with a charming smile*) I am rather tired Old-world, you would call it

KURT You can be anything you like

FEYDAK (*satirically*) Thank you

KURT You've written lovely music—I have a friend who plays every note of it I didn't see your operetta when it was done here I didn't have the price it was very badly done though, I heard

FEYDAK I must explain to you—you are under a misapprehension

KURT It was done here, wasn't it?

FEYDAK Not about the operetta You are under a misapprehension—about me I am a composer—but I didn't write "Danubia" That was my brother, Victor Feydak You are right He is dead You are the first person I have met in New York who even suspected it

KURT I'm sorry.

FEYDAK Not at all I am flattered At home our identities were never confused Is this the well-known American hospitality? It is, in some sort, compensation for his death

(KURT is embarrassed and uncomfortable It is part of his essential insecurity, he is only really at home in protest He wants to get out)

KURT I'm sorry—I

FEYDAK (easily) But why?

KURT I think I'll leave a note for Miss Froude—get that girl in here, will you?

FEYDAK Let's have some tea—she's sure to be in any minute

KURT No, thanks And you might tell her for me that if she wants to see me about the matter I wrote her about she can come to my office (MARION FROUDE comes in She is one of those women the sight of whom on Fifth Ave, where she has just been walking, causes foreigners to exclaim enthusiastically that American women are the most radiant in the world She is tall, lithe, indomitably alive Unlike KURT, the tears in things have warmed without scalding her, she floats life like a dancer's scarf in perpetual enjoyment of its colors and contours)

MARION (to KURT) I'm so sorry!

FEYDAK (coming toward her) I don't believe a word of it! (She is overjoyed at seeing FEYDAK She can't believe for a second that it is he Then she flues into his arms)

MARION Feydie! Oh, Feydie, I've been trying everywhere to reach you

—I can't believe it Feydie darling!

FEYDAK (severely) Is this how you keep a business appointment, Miss Froude?

MARION How long have you waited? If I'd only known (Suddenly conscious that KURT had wasted too) Oh, I'm sorry, Mr — Mr — ?

KURT Kurt Richard Kurt

MARION Oh, of course, Mr Kurt I say—could you possibly—would it be too much trouble—could you come back?

FEYDAK (same tone) This young man is here on business It is more important I can wait I'll come back

MARION No, no, Feydie—no, no I can't wait for that I'm sure Mr Kurt will understand Mr Feydak is an old friend whom I haven't seen in ever so long It isn't as if Mr Kurt were a regular businessman

FEYDAK (amused) How do you know he isn't?

MARION (breathless with excitement) I can tell He's not a bit like his letter When I got your letter I was sure you were jowley and, you know— (She makes a gesture) convex I'm sure, Feydie—whatever the business is— (To KURT) you did say you had some, didn't you?—I'm sure it can wait A half-hour anyway Can't it wait a half-hour? You see, Feydie and I haven't seen each other since

KURT Viennal

MARION (astomshed). Yes How did you know?

KURT It's always since Vienna that Bohemians haven't seen each other, isn't it? I'll be back in thirty minutes (*He goes*)

MARION What a singular young man!

FEYDAK I've been having a very amusing talk with him Professional rebel, I think Well, my dear—you look marvelous! (*They take each other in*)

MARION Isn't it wonderful

FEYDAK It is nice! (*They sit on sofa, MARION left of FEYDAK*)

MARION How long is it?

FEYDAK Well, it's since

MARION (*firmly*) Since Vicki died

FEYDAK That's right I haven't seen you since

MARION Since that day—we walked behind him

FEYDAK Yes

MARION I felt I couldn't bear to stay on I left for London that night

FEYDAK Yes

MARION It's six years, isn't it?

FEYDAK Yes Six years last June (*A pause*)

MARION What's happened since then? Nothing

FEYDAK How long have you been here?

MARION Two weeks

FEYDAK Busy?

MARION Not professionally, I'm afraid People are charming—they ask me to lunch and dinner and they're—"oh, so interested"—but no commissions so far And God, how I need it

FEYDAK I'm surprised I gathered you'd been very successful

MARION It's always sounded like it, hasn't it? The impression, I believe, is due to the extreme notoriety of some of my sitters Oh, I've managed well enough up to now—if I'd been more provident I dare say I could have put a tidy bit by—but at the moment people don't seem in a mood to have their portraits done Are they less vain than they used to be? Or just poorer?

FEYDAK Both, I think

MARION Last time I came here I was awfully busy Had great *réclame* because I'd been in Russia doing leading Communists Obeying some subtle paradox the big financiers flocked to me Pittsburgh manufacturers wanted to be done by the same brush that had tackled Lenin Now they seem less eager Must be some reason, Feydie But what about you? Let me hear about you How's Kathie?

FEYDAK Well She's here with me.

MARION And Sadye?

FEYDAK Splendid

MARION She must be a big girl now

FEYDAK As tall as you are

MARION Kathie used to hate me, didn't she? Frightened to death of me. Was afraid I was after Vicki's money

FEYDAK Yes She was afraid you'd marry him and that we should have less from him. When we knew he was dying she was in a panic

MARION Poor dear—I could have spared her all that worry if she'd been halfway civil to me

FEYDAK Kathie is practical. And she is a good mother. Those are attributes which make women avaricious

MARION Did Vicki leave you very much?

FEYDAK Not very much. Half to you

MARION Really? How sweet of him! How dear of him!

FEYDAK We've spent it

MARION Of course you should.

FEYDAK But I'll soon be in position to repay you your share. I'm on my way to Hollywood

MARION Are you really? How wonderful for you, Feydie! I'm so glad

FEYDAK You've been there, haven't you?

MARION Yes. Last time I was in America

FEYDAK. Did you like it?

MARION Well, it's the new Eldorado—ert on the gold-rush

FEYDAK (*with a kind of ironic bitterness*) Vicki left me an inheritance subject, it appears, to perpetual renewal

MARION How do you mean?

FEYDAK Things have been going from bad to worse in Vienna—you haven't been there since '25 so you don't know. The theatre's pretty well dead—even the first-rate fellows have had a hard time making their way. I managed to get several scores to do—but they were not—except that they were failures—up to my usual standard

MARION (*laughing, reproachful*) Oh, Feydie

FEYDAK If it weren't for the money Vicki left me—and you!—I don't know how we should have got through at all these six years. About a month ago we reached the end of our rope—we were hopelessly in debt—no means of getting out—when the miracle happened
(*MARION is excited, touches his knee with her hand*)

MARION (*murmuring*) I can't bear it

FEYDAK It was my dramatic agent on the phone. A great American film magnate was in town and wanted to see me. Ausgerechnet me and no other. Even my agent couldn't keep the surprise out of his voice. Why me? I asked. God knows, says the agent. Well, we went around to the Bristol to see the magnate. And, as we talked to him, it gradually became apparent. He thought I was Vicki. He didn't know Vicki was dead! He thought I had written "Danubia."

MARION Did he say so?

FEYDAK No—not at all. But as we shook hands at the end he said to me "Any man that can write a tune like this is the kind of man we want." And he whistled, so out of tune that I could hardly recognize it myself, the waltz from Danubia. Do you remember it? (He starts to hum the waltz and MARION joins him. They hum together, then FEYDAK continues to talk as MARION continues to hum a few more measures.) He was so innocent, so affable that I had an impulse to say to him "Look here, old fellow, you don't want me, you want my brother and, in order to get him, you'll have to resurrect him!" But noble impulses are luxury impulses. You have to be well off to gratify them. I kept quiet. We shook hands and here I am. Tonight they're giving me a dinner at the Waldorf Astoria for the press to meet my brother! Irony if you like, eh, Marion? (There is a pause.)

MARION Feydie. (A moment. He does not answer.) Feydie—do you mind if I say something to you—very frankly?

FEYDAK I doubt whether you can say anything to me more penetrating than the remarks I habitually address to myself.

MARION You know Vicki was very fond of you. He used to say you put too high a valuation on genius.

FEYDAK Because he had it he could afford to deprecate it.

MARION Over and over again he used to say to me "You know, Marion," he would say, "as a human being Feydie's far superior to me,

more amiable, more witty, more talented, more patient."

FEYDAK (shakes his head) Not true. I simply gave the impression of these things.

MARION You underrate yourself, Feydie. How this would have amused him—this incident with the Hollywood man!

FEYDAK (smiling bitterly) It would rather.

MARION Why do you grudge giving him a laugh somewhere? I never had a chance to tell you in Vienna—things were so—so close and terrible—at the end—but he had the greatest tenderness for you. He used to speak of you—I can't tell you how much. "Because of this sixth sense for making tunes which I have and he hasn't," he said to me one day—not a week before he died—"he thinks himself less than me." He used to tell me that everything he had he owed to you—to the sacrifices you made to send him to the Conservatory when he was a boy. The extent to which he had outstripped you hurt him—hurt him. I felt he would have given anything to dip into the golden bowl of his genius and pour it over you. And do you know what was the terror of his life, the obsessing terror of his life?—his fear of your resenting him.

FEYDAK (moved, deeply ashamed). Marion.

MARION Don't resent him now, Feydie. Why, it's such fun—don't you see? It's such a curious, marginal survival for him—that a badly-remembered waltz-tune, five years after his death, should be the

means of helping you at a moment when you need it so badly. It's delicious, Feydie. It's such fun! The only awful thing is the possibility that he is unaware of it. It would have pleased him so, Feydie. Must you grudge him it?

FEYDAK. You make me horribly ashamed.

MARION (*brightly*). Nonsense.

FEYDAK. Because I did grudge him it—yes—I won't, though—I see now that it never occurred to me how (*Bursts out laughing suddenly*) God, it is funny, isn't it?

MARION (*joining in his laughter*). Of course—it's delightful (*They both laugh heartily and long*).

MARION. And the funny thing is—you'll be much better for them out there than he would have been.

FEYDAK. Surely! They'll be able to whistle my tunes!

MARION. Don't you see!

FEYDAK. Oh, Lieber Schatzel, come out there with me.

MARION. Can't.

FEYDAK. I wish, Marion, you would come. I never feel life so warm and good as when you are in the neighborhood.

MARION. Dear Feydie, you're very comforting.

FEYDAK. Is there someone that keeps you here?

MARION. No, there's no one. I'm quite alone.

FEYDAK. Well then!

MARION. No, this isn't the moment for me, Feydie. Besides, I can't afford the journey. I'm frightfully hard up at the moment.

FEYDAK. Well, look here, I

MARION. No, that's sweet of you but I couldn't.

FEYDAK. I don't see why—it's too silly.

MARION. Vanity. A kind of vanity.

FEYDAK. But I owe it to you!

MARION. I suppose it is foolish in a way—but I've a kind of pride in maneuvering on my own. I always have done it—in that way at least I've been genuinely independent. I'm a little proud of my ingenuity. And do you know, Feydie, no matter how hard up I've been at different times something's always turned up for me. I have a kind of curiosity to know what it will be this time. It would spoil the fun for me to take money from my friends. Nothing so much as that would make me doubtful of my own—shall we say—marketability?

FEYDAK. Paradoxical, isn't it?

MARION. Why not? Anyway, it's a pet idée of mine, so be a darling and let me indulge it, will you, Feydie, and don't offer me money. Anyway, I've a business proposition on.

FEYDAK. Have you?

MARION. That young man who was just here. Do you suppose he'll come back? Now I think of it we were a

bit short with him, weren't we? I was so glad to see you I couldn't be bothered with him! (*Sound of door-bell*) Ah! You see! (*Calls outside*) Show him in, Minnie!
(MINNIE comes in and exits hall-door to admit the visitor)

FEYDAK What are you doing for dinner?

MARION There's a young man who attached himself to me on the boat

FEYDAK Oh, Marion!

MARION I seem to attract youth, Feydie What shall I do about it?

FEYDAK Where are you dining?

MARION I don't know . Which speakeasy? Tell me which one and I'll

(MINNIE ushers in MR LEANDER NOLAN He is middle-aged, ample, handsome Looks like the late Warren Gamahel Harding Sobberly dressed and wears a waistcoat with white piping on it The façade is impeccable but in NOLAN's eye you may discern, at odd moments, an uncertainty, an almost boyish anxiety to please, to be right, that is rather engaging MARION, who expected the young man, is rather startled MR NOLAN regards her with satisfaction)

NOLAN Hello, Marion

MARION (*doubtfully, feels she should remember him*) How do you do? Er—will you excuse me—just a second ?

NOLAN (*genially*) Certainly (*He moves right MARION walks FEYDIE to the hall door*)

FEYDAK (*under his breath to her*) Looks like a commission (*She makes a gesture of silent prayer*)

MARION (*out loud*) Telephone me in an hour, will you, Feydie, and let me know which speakeasy

FEYDAK (*once he has her in the hall-way out of NOLAN's hearing*) Also, du kommst ganz sicher?

MARION Vielleicht später 'Bye, Feydie dear

(FEYDIE goes out MARION turns to face NOLAN who is standing with his arms behind his back rather enjoying the surprise he is about to give her)

NOLAN How are you, Marion?

MARION (*delicately*) Er—do I know you?

NOLAN Yes You know me

MARION Oh, yes—of course!

NOLAN About time!

MARION (*brightly insecure*) Lady Winchester's garden-party at Ascot—two summers ago

NOLAN Guess again!

MARION No—I know you perfectly well—it's just that—no, don't tell me (*She covers her eyes with her hand, trying to conjure him out of the past*)

NOLAN This is astonishing If someone had said to me that I could walk into a room in front of Marion Froude and she not know me I'd have told 'em they were crazy !

MARION (*desperate*) I do know you I know you perfectly well—it's just that . . .

NOLAN You'll be awful sore at yourself—I warn you

MARION I can't forgive myself now—I know!

NOLAN I don't believe it!

MARION The American Embassy dinner in Rome on the Fourth of July—last year—you sat on my right

NOLAN I did not!

MARION (*miserably*) Well, you sat somewhere Where did you sit?

NOLAN I wasn't there

MARION Well, I think it's very unkind of you to keep me in suspense like this I can't bear it another second!

NOLAN I wouldn't have believed it!

MARION Well, give me some hint, will you?

NOLAN Think of home—think of Tennessee!

MARION Oh . . . !

NOLAN Little Mary Froude .

MARION (*a light breaking in on her*) No! Oh, no!

NOLAN Well, it's about time

MARION But I You were .

NOLAN Well, so were you!

MARION But—Bunny—you aren't Bunny Nolan, are you? You're his brother!

NOLAN I have no brother

MARION But Bunny—Bunny dear—how important you've become!

NOLAN I haven't done badly—no

MARION Here, give me your coat and hat— (*MARION, taking his coat and hat, crosses upstage to piano, and leaves them there Laughing, a little hysterical*) You should have warned me It's not fair of you Bunny! Of all people—I can scarcely believe it (*A moment's pause He doesn't quite like her calling him Bunny but he doesn't know how to stop it She sits on model stand looking up at him as she says*) You look wonderful You look like a—like a—Senator or something monumental like that

NOLAN (*sits on sofa below piano*) That's a good omen I'll have to tell Orin

MARION What's a good omen? And who is Orin?

NOLAN Your saying I look like a Senator Because—I don't want to be premature—but in a few months I may be one

MARION A Senator!

NOLAN (*smiling*) Senator Washington Not Nashville

MARION Do you want to be a Senator or can't you help it?

NOLAN (*to whom this point of view is incomprehensible*) What do you mean?

MARION. I'll paint you, Bunny Toga. Ferrule. Tribune of the people

NOLAN Not a bad idea Not a bad idea at all I remember now—you were always sketching me Sketching everything Say, you've done pretty well yourself, haven't you?

MARION Not as well as you have, Bunny Imagine Bunny Nolan—a Senator at Washington Well, well! And tell me—how do I seem to you? You knew me at once, didn't you?

NOLAN Sure I did You haven't changed so much—a little, perhaps.

MARION (*delicately*) Ampler?

NOLAN (*inspecting her*) No . . . not that I can notice .

MARION (*with a sigh of relief*) That's wonderful

NOLAN You look just the same. You are just the same

MARION Oh, you don't know, Bunny I'm artful How long is it since we've seen each other? Twelve years anyway More than that—fifteen

NOLAN Just about—hadn't even begun to practice law yet .

MARION We were just kids children And now look at you! I can see how successful you are, Bunny

NOLAN How?

MARION White piping on your vest That suggests directorates to me Multiple control Vertical corporations Are you vertical or horizontal, Bunny?

NOLAN. I'm both.

MARION Good for you! Married?

NOLAN Not yet .

MARION How did you escape? You're going to be, though

NOLAN I'm engaged

MARION Who's the lucky girl?

NOLAN Slade Kinnicott Daughter of Orrin Kinnicott

MARION Orrin Kinnicott The newspaper publisher?

NOLAN Yes He's backing me for the Senate

MARION Well, if he's backing you you ought to get in All that circulation—not very good circulation, is it? Still, one vote's as good as another, I suppose

NOLAN (*hurt*) In my own State the Kinnicott papers are as good as any

MARION Well, I wish you luck I'm sure you'll have it My! Senator Nolan!

NOLAN If I get in I'll be the youngest Senator

MARION And the best-looking too, Bunny

NOLAN (*embarrassed*) Well

MARION You're fussed! How charming of you' (*She sits beside him.*) Oh, Bunny, I'm very proud of you, really

NOLAN. You see, Marion, I've been pretty successful in the law Tremendously successful, I may say I've organized some of the biggest mergers of recent years I've made a fortune—a sizeable fortune Well, one day I woke up and I said to myself Look here Nolan, you've got to take stock You've got to ask yourself where you're heading I'd been so busy I'd never had a chance to ask myself these fundamental questions before And I decided to call a halt You've got enough, more than enough for life, I said to myself It's time you quit piling up money for yourself and began thinking about your fellow-man I've always been ambitious, Marion You know that You shared all my early dreams

MARION Of course I did

NOLAN Remember I always told you I didn't want money and power for their own sakes—I always wanted to be a big man in a real sense—to do something for my country and my time

MARION Yes Sometimes you sounded like Daniel Webster, darling I'm not a bit surprised you're going in the Senate

NOLAN I never thought—even in my wildest dreams

MARION Well, you see you underestimated yourself You may go even higher—the White House—why not?

NOLAN I never let myself think of that

MARION Why not? It's no more wonderful that what's happened already, is it?

NOLAN (*Napoleon at Saint Helena*). Destiny!

MARION Exactly Destiny!

NOLAN (*kind, richly human, patronizing*) And you, my dear ?

MARION As you see Obscure Uncertain Alone Nowhere at all Not the remotest chance of my getting into the Senate—unless I marry into it Oh, Bunny, after you get to Washington will you introduce me to some Senators?

NOLAN Well, that's premature . . . Naturally if the people should favor me I'd do what I could I never forget a friend Whatever faults I may have, disloyalty, I hope, is not one of them

MARION Of course it isn't You're a dear You always were (*A moment's pause*)

NOLAN Who was that fellow I found you with when I came in?

MARION An old friend of mine from Vienna—a composer

NOLAN You've been a lot with foreigners, haven't you?

MARION A good deal . . .

NOLAN Funny, I don't understand that

MARION Foreigners are people, you know, Bunny Some of 'em are rather nice

NOLAN When I'm abroad a few weeks home begins to look pretty good to me

MARION I love New York but I can't say I feel an acute nostalgia for Tennessee (*Another pause He stares at her suddenly—still incredulous that he should be seeing her at all, and that, after all these years and quite without him, she should be radiant still*)

NOLAN Little Marion Froude! I can't believe it somehow

MARION Oh, Bunny! You're sweet! You're so—ingenuous That's what I always liked about you

NOLAN What do you mean?

MARION The way you look at me, the incredulity, the surprise What did you expect to see? A hulk, a remnant, a whitened sepulchre what?

NOLAN (*uncomfortable at being caught*) Not—not at all

MARION Tell me, Bunny, what I won't be hurt

NOLAN (*miserably, stumbling*) Well, naturally, after what I'd heard

MARION What have you heard? Oh, do tell me, Bunny

NOLAN Well, I mean—about your life

MARION Racy, Bunny? Racy?

NOLAN No use going into that You chose your own way Everybody has a right to live their own life, I guess

MARION (*pats his arm*) That's very handsome of you Bunny I hope you take that liberal point of view when you reach the Senate

NOLAN I came here, Marion, in a perfectly sincere mood, to say something to you, something that's been on my mind ever since we parted, but if you're going to be flippant I suppose there's no use my saying anything—I might as well go in fact. (*But he makes no attempt to do so*)

MARION (*seriously*) Do forgive me, Bunny One gets into an idiom that passes for banter but really I'm not so changed I'm not flippant I'm awfully glad to see you, Bunny (*An undertone of sadness creeps into her voice*) After all, one makes very few real friends in life—and you are part of my youth—we are part of each other's youth

NOLAN You didn't even know me!

MARION Complete surprise! After all I've been in New York many times during these years and never once—never once have you come near me You've dropped me all these years (*With a sigh*) I'm afraid, Bunny, your career has been too much with you

NOLAN (*grimly*) So has yours!

MARION I detect an overtone—faint but unmistakable—of moral censure

NOLAN (*same tone*) Well, I suppose it's impossible to live one's life in art without being sexually promiscuous! (*He looks at her accusingly*)

MARION Oh, dear me, Bunny! What shall I do? Shall I blush? Shall I hang my head in shame? What shall I do? How does one react in the face of an appalling accusation of this sort? I didn't know the news had got around so widely

NOLAN Well, so many of your lovers have been famous men

MARION We'd quarrelled about something, hadn't we?

MARION Well, you were obscure But you're famous now, aren't you? I seem to be stimulating if nothing else

NOLAN I realized after you left me how much I'd grown to depend on you—

MARION Dear Bunny!

NOLAN If I had then some of the fame I have now you probably wouldn't have walked out on me at the last minute the way you did

NOLAN I plunged into work I worked fiercely to forget you I did forget you— (He looks away from her) And yet—

MARION Dear, dear Bunny, that's not quite—

MARION And yet—?

NOLAN (*irritated beyond control*) I wish you wouldn't call me Bunny

NOLAN The way we'd separated and I never heard from you—it left something bitter in my mind—something— (He hesitates for a word)

MARION Well, I always did What is your real name?

MARION (*supplying it*) Unresolved!

NOLAN You know perfectly well

NOLAN (*Quickly—relieved that she understands so exactly*) Yes All these years I've wanted to see you, to get it off my mind—

MARION I swear I don't

NOLAN My name is Leander

MARION Did you want the last word, Bunny dear?

MARION Bunny, really .

NOLAN That is my name

NOLAN (*fiercely*) I wanted to see you, to stand before you, to tell myself—"Here she is and—and what of it!"

MARION Really I'd forgotten that Leander! Who was he—he did something in the Hellespont, didn't he? What did he do in the Hellespont?

MARION Well, can you?

NOLAN (*sharply*) Beside the point

NOLAN (*heatedly, with transparent overemphasis*) Yes! Yes!

MARION Sorry! You say you wanted to tell me something—

NOLAN (*grimly*) Yes!

MARION Good for you, Bunny I know just how you feel—like having a tooth out, isn't it? (*Sincerely*) In justice to myself—I must tell you this—that the reason I walked out on you in the summary way I did was not, as you've just suggested, because I doubted your future—it was ob

MARION I love to be told things

NOLAN That night you left me—

vious to me, even then, that you were destined for mighty things—but the reason was that I felt a disparity in our characters not conducive to matrimonial contentment. You see how right I was. I suspected in myself a—a tendency to explore, a spiritual and physical wanderlust—that I knew would horrify you once you found it out. It horrifies you now when we are no longer anything to each other. Imagine, Leander dear, if we were married how much more difficult it would be—If there is any one thing you have to be grateful to me for it is that instant's clear vision I had which made me see, which made me look ahead, which made me tear myself away from you. Why, everything you have now—your future, your prospects—even your fiancée, Leander dear—you owe to me—no, I won't say to me—to that instinct—to that premonition.

NOLAN (*nostalgic*) We might have done it together.

MARION I wouldn't have stood for a fiancée, Bunny dear—not even I am as promiscuous as that.

NOLAN Don't use that word!

MARION But, Leander! It's your own!

NOLAN Do you think it hasn't been on my conscience ever since, do you think it hasn't tortured me!

MARION What, dear?

NOLAN That thought!

MARION Which thought?

NOLAN Every time I heard about you—all the notoriety that's attended you in the American papers

painting pictures of Communist statesmen, running around California with movie comedians!

MARION I have to practice my profession, Bunny. One must live, you know. Besides, I've done Capitalist statesmen too. And at Geneva.

NOLAN (*darkly*) You know what I mean . . . !

MARION You mean . . . (*She whispers through her cupped hand*) you mean promiscuous? Has that gotten around, Bunny? Is it whispered in the sewing-circles of Nashville? Will I be burned for a witch if I go back home? Will they have a trial over me? Will you defend me?

NOLAN (*quite literally, with sincere and disarming simplicity*) I should be forced, as an honest man, to stand before the multitude and say. In condemning this woman you are condemning me who am asking your suffrages to represent you. For it was I with whom this woman first sinned before God. As an honorable man that is what I should have to do.

MARION And has this worried you—actually . . . !

NOLAN It's tortured me . . . !

MARION You're the holy man and I'm Thais! That gives me an idea for the portrait which I hope you will commission me to do. I'll do you in a hair-shirt. Savonarola. He was a Senator too, wasn't he? Or was he?

NOLAN (*gloomily contemplating her*) I can't forget that it was I who

MARION. Did you think you were the first, Bunny? Was I so unscrupu-

bashfully coquettish as to lead you to believe that I—oh, I couldn't have been. It's not like me
(*She crosses to right of model stand*)

NOLAN (*fiercely*) Don't lie to me!

MARION (*sitting on stand*) Bunny, you frighten me!

NOLAN (*stands over her almost threateningly*) You're lying to me to save my conscience but I won't have it! I know my guilt and I'm going to bear it!

MARION Well, I don't want to deprive you of your little pleasures but

NOLAN You're evil, Marion. You haven't the face of evil but you're evil—evil!

MARION Oh, Bunny darling, now you can't mean that surely. What's come over you? You never were like that—or were you? You know perfectly well I'm not evil. Casual—maybe—but not evil. Good Heavens, Bunny, I might as well say you're evil because you're intolerant. These are differences in temperament, that's all—charming differences in temperament.

NOLAN (*shakes his head, unconvinced*) Sophistry!

MARION All right, Dean Inge Sophistry. By the way I've met the Gloomy Dean and he's not gloomy at all—he's very jolly. (*Gets up from stand*) Let's have a cup of tea, shall we? Will your constituents care if you have a cup of tea with a promiscuous woman? Will they have to know?

NOLAN I'm afraid I can't, Marion. I have to be getting on.

MARION Oh, stay and have some tea— (*Makes him sit down*) what do you have to do that can't wait for a cup of tea? (*Calls off*) Minnie—Minnie.

MINNIE (*appears in doorway*) Ja, Fraulein.

MARION Bitte—Thee.

MINNIE Ja, Fraulein. (*She goes out* MARION smiles at NOLAN and sits beside him. He is quite uncomfortable.)

NOLAN (*slightly embarrassed*) About the painting, Marion.

MARION Oh, I was only joking. . . don't let yourself be bullied into it.

NOLAN I've never been painted in oils. It might do for campaign purposes. And, if I should be elected, it would be very helpful to you in Washington.

MARION You're awfully kind, Bunny. I must tell you frankly though that the dignified Senatorial style isn't exactly my forte. However, I might try. Yes—I'll try. (*She gives him a long look*) I'll go the limit on you, Bunny—when I get through with you you'll be a symbol of Dignity. Solid man. No nonsense. Safe and sane. Holds the middle course—a slogan in a frock-coat. I'll make you look like Warren G. Harding—even handsomer—Get you the women's votes.

NOLAN Well, that'll be very nice of you.
(MARION suddenly kisses him.)

MARION Thank you, darling! (*He is very uncomfortable, embarrassed and thrilled*)

NOLAN Marion I

MARION Just a rush of feeling, dear!

NOLAN You understand that this—this commission

MARION Of course Strictly business Don't worry I shan't kiss you again till it's finished

NOLAN I don't know whether I told you—I'm going to be married in a month

MARION I'll have the portrait ready for your wedding-day

NOLAN And I am devoted to Slade with every fibre of my being

MARION Every fibre—how thorough!

NOLAN I'm not a Bohemian, you know, Marion

MARION Don't tell me! You're a gypsy! (*She continues to study him, poses him, poses his hand MINNIE enters from left with tea tray containing teapot, cups and saucers, spoons, sugar and cream, and a plate of cakes She puts tray on model stand and exits left*) Oh, Bunny, what fun it'll be to do you Thank you, Minnie Tell me—how do you see yourself?

NOLAN What do you mean?

MARION In your heart of hearts—how do you see yourself? Napoleon, Scipio, Mussolini ?

NOLAN Nonsense! Do you think I'm an actor?

MARION Of course Everybody is. Everybody has some secret vision of himself Do you know what mine is? Do you know how I see myself? (*The doorbell rings*)

NOLAN (*ironically*) More visitors!

MARION (*calls to MINNIE*) See who it is, will you, Minnie? Probably the young man I met on the boat coming to take me to dinner.

NOLAN What's his name?

MARION I've forgotten He's just a boy I met on the boat

NOLAN How can anybody live the way you live?

MARION It's a special talent dear (*Doorbell rings again*) Minnie, go to the door (*MINNIE comes in and exits hallway*) This is my lucky day, Bunny

NOLAN Would you mind, in front of strangers, not calling me Bunny?

MARION Oh, of course, what is it?

NOLAN (*irritated*) Leander

MARION (*mnemonic*) Leander—Hellas—Leander (*MINNIE comes downstage a few feet from the door*)

MINNIE (*just inside the room*) It's the Junge who was here before—er sagt er ist ausgeschifft da—

MARION Oh, show him in, Minnie, and bring a cup for him too

MINNIE (*as she goes*) Ja

NOLAN And don't use these extravagant terms of endearment—anybody who didn't know you would misunderstand it

MARION (*very happy*) All right, darling (MINNIE *ushers in* RICHARD KURT, *goes out, comes back again with more tea* MARION *comes forward to greet him*) I'm so glad to see you again, Mr —

KURT Kurt

MARION Oh .

KURT With a K

MARION (*reassured*) Oh—I'll try to remember This is Senator Nolan—Mr Kurt

NOLAN (*glowering*) I am not Senator Nolan

MARION But you will be (*She offers him a cup of tea, he takes it*) Can't I just call you that—between ourselves? It gives me such a sense of quiet power And maybe it'll impress my visitor Do have a cup of tea, Mr Kurt (*She gives him one*)

KURT (*puts his hat on sofa left*) I am not impressed by politicians And I didn't come to drink tea I am here on business (Nevertheless he takes a hearty sip)

MARION Well, you can do both They do in England American businessmen are so tense

KURT I'm not a businessman

NOLAN Well, whatever you are, you are very ill-mannered

KURT (*pleased*) That's true!

MARION (*delighted*) Isn't it nice you agree? For a moment I thought you weren't going to hit it off .

NOLAN In my day if a boy came in and behaved like this before a lady he'd be horsewhipped

KURT Well, when you get into the Senate you can introduce a horse-whipping bill Probably bring you great kudos

NOLAN You talk like a Bolshevik

KURT Thank you! You talk like a Senator!

(MARION *wants to laugh but thinks better of it* She looks at KURT with a new eye)

MARION (*quickly offering him more tea*) Another cup, Mr Kurt .

KURT (*taking it*) Thank you

MARION And one of these cakes—they're very nice Minnie made them—almost as good as *lebkuchen* Minnie spoils me

KURT (*taking it*) Thank you (*Eats cake*) Having said, from our respective points of view, the worst thing we could say about each other, having uttered the ultimate insult, there's no reason we can't be friends, Senator Damn good cake No lunch as a matter of fact

MARION That's what's the matter with him—he was hungry—hungry boy

NOLAN (*puts teacup on piano*) He probably wants to sell you some insurance

KURT Not at all I'm not here to sell I'm here to buy

MARION A picture!

KURT Do I look like a picture-buyer?

MARION As a matter of fact you don't but I haven't anything to sell except pictures

KURT (*confidently*) I think you have!

MARION (*to NOLAN*) This young man is very tantalizing

NOLAN Well, why don't you ask him to state his proposition and have done with it?

MARION (*turns to KURT and repeats mechanically*) State your proposition and have done with it

KURT (*puts his cup down on table rear of sofa left*) What a nuisance women are!

NOLAN (*starting toward him*) Why, you insolent young whelp—I've half a mind to

KURT (*pleasantly*) That's an impulse you'd better control I wrote this lady a business letter asking for an appointment She granted it to me at four o'clock It is now six In that interval I've climbed these five flights of stairs three times I've lost over an hour of my life going away and coming back An hour in which I might have read a first-class book or made love to a girl or had an idea—an irreparable hour That's rudeness if you like It's unbusinesslike It's sloppy (*To MARION*) Now will you see me alone or will you keep me here fencing with this inadequate antagonist?

MARION You are unquestionably the most impossible young man I've ever met. Go away!

KURT Right! (*He turns to go and means it and she knows that he means it And she is consumed with curiosity As he goes*) So long, Senator! Yours for the Revolution!

MARION (*as he reaches door, goes after him—pleads pitifully*) Young man! Mr Nolan is an old friend of mine I should consult him in any case about whatever business you may suggest Can't you speak in front of him? (*At the same time she shakes her head to him not to go away*)

KURT I cannot!

MARION Please wait a minute

KURT All right—one (*He picks up a magazine and leafs through it negligently*)

MARION (*to LEANDER*) After all, Leander, I can't afford—it may be something (*She takes his arm and starts walking him to the door, whispering*) I'm just curious to hear what he's got to say for himself

NOLAN I'm not sure it's safe to leave you alone with a character like that

MARION Minnie's in her room with a bow and arrow!

NOLAN (*going up to hall door*) I have to go in any case—I'm late now

MARION When will I see you, Bunny? (*She is at door with him*)

NOLAN (*taking up his hat and coat*) I don't know I'm very busy I'll telephone you

MARION Do Telephone me tonight. I'll tell you what he said It'll probably be funny

NOLAN (*out loud at KURT*). It pains me, Marion, that you are so unprotected that any hooligan—(*KURT turns page of magazine*) can write you and come to see you in your apartment. However, that is the way you have chosen. Good night.

MARION Good night, dear. Are you in the book? I'll telephone you.

NOLAN (*hastily*). No—no—you'd better not. I shall communicate with you. Good-bye.

KURT Good-bye, Sir Galahad. (*NOLAN starts to retort, changes his mind and, in a very choleric mood, he goes out. There is a pause.*)

MARION Well, I'm afraid you didn't make a very good impression on him!

KURT (*putting magazine away*). That's just too bad!

MARION That's no way for a young man to get on in the world—he's a very important person.

KURT That's what passes for importance. You're not taken in by him, are you? Stuffed shirt—flatulent and pompous—perfect legislator!

MARION As a matter of fact he's a very nice man—simple and kindly. (*Gets cigarettes and offers one to KURT who takes it and lights it. She takes one too but he forgets to light hers.*)

KURT. I bet he isn't simple and he isn't kindly. I bet he's greedy and vicious. Anyway he's a hypocrite. When a man starts worrying out loud about unprotected women you may know he's a hypocritical sensualist.

MARION. You're a violent young man, aren't you? (*Not getting light from KURT she lights her own. Throwing match to floor.*)

KURT Yes. The world is full of things and people that makes me see red. Why do you keep calling me youth and young man? I'm twenty-five.

MARION Well, you seem to have the lurid and uncorrected imagination of the adolescent.

KURT Imagination! That's where you're wrong. I may tell you, Miss Froude, that I'm as realistic as anybody you've ever met.

MARION (*sitting on upstage arm of sofa, right*). Anybody who'd be so unreasonable over a nice fellow like Bunny Nolan, if you only knew—if only you'd been present at the interview I had with him just before you came. You'd have seen how wrong you are about him. Why, he was—he was awfully funny—but he was also touching.

KURT You're one of those tolerant people, aren't you—see the best in people?

MARION You say that as if tolerance were a crime.

KURT Your kind is. It's criminal because it encourages dishonesty, incompetence, weakness and all kinds of knavery. What you call tolerance I call sloppy laziness. You're like those book-reviewers who find something to praise in every mediocre book.

MARION. You are a fanatical young man.

KURT Having said that you think you dispose of me Well, so be it I'm disposed of Now, let's get down to business (His manner plainly says "Well, why should I bother to convince you? What importance can it possibly have what you think of me?" It is not wasted on MARION)

MARION You are also a little patronizing

KURT (pleased) Am I?

MARION However, I don't mind being patronized That's where my tolerance comes in It even amuses me a little bit (Crossing to piano seat) But as I have to change for dinner perhaps you'd better

KURT Exactly

MARION Please sit down (A moment She sits on piano bench facing him)

KURT (goes to piano and talks to her across it) I am the editor of a magazine called Every Week Do you know it?

MARION It seems to me I've seen it on newsstands

KURT You've never read it?

MARION I'm afraid I haven't

KURT That is a tribute to your discrimination We have an immense circulation Three millions, I believe With a circulation of that size you may imagine that the average of our readers' intelligence cannot be very high Yet occasionally we flatter them by printing the highbrows—in discreet doses we give them, at intervals, Shaw and Wells and Chester-

ton So you'll be in good company anyway

MARION (amazed) I will?

KURT Yes I want you to write your biography to run serially in Every Week Later of course you can bring it out as a book

MARION My biography?

KURT Yes The story of your life

MARION (with dignity) I know the meaning of the word

KURT The money is pretty good I am prepared to give you an advance of two thousand dollars

MARION Good Heavens, am I as old as that—that people want my biography?

KURT We proceed on the theory that nothing exciting happens to people after they are forty

MARION What a cruel idea!

KURT Why wait till you're eighty? Your impressions will be dimmed by time Most autobiographies are written by corpses Why not do yours while you are still young, vital, in the thick of life?

MARION But I'm not a writer I shouldn't know how to begin

KURT You were born, weren't you? Begin with that

MARION I write pleasant letters, my friends tell me But look here, why should you want this story from me—why should anybody be interested?—I'm not a first-rate artist

you know—not by far—I'm just clever .

KURT (*bluntly*) It's not you—it's the celebrity of your subjects

MARION (*amused*) You're a brutal young man—I rather like you

KURT Well, you've been courageous You've been forthright For an American woman you've had a rather extraordinary career—you've done pretty well what you wanted

MARION The Woman-Who-Dared sort of thing Isn't that passé?

KURT I think your life will make good copy You might have stayed here and settled down and done Pictorial Review covers of mothers hovering fondly over babies Instead you went to Europe and managed to get the most inaccessible people to sit for you How did you do it?

MARION You'd be surprised how accessible some of these inaccessible people are!

KURT Well, that's just what I want to get from your story Just that Tell what happened to you, that's all The impulse that made you leave home, that made you go, for instance, to Russia, before the popular emigration set in, that's made you wander ever since, that's kept you from settling down in any of the places where you had a chance to get established

MARION (*quite seriously*) But supposing I don't know that

KURT Well, that's interesting That enigma is interesting Maybe, while writing, you can solve it It's a form of clarification The more I talk to

you the more I feel there's a great story in you and that you'll have great fun telling it

MARION Young man, you make me feel like an institution!

KURT Should do you a lot of good in your professional career too—we'll reprint the portraits you've made of Lenin, Mussolini, Shaw—anything you like
(*She begins to laugh, quietly at first, then heartily*)

MARION Forgive me

KURT (*unperturbed*) What's the matter?

MARION Something I remembered—the funniest thing—isn't it funny how the oddest things pop into your mind?

KURT What was it?

MARION Something that happened years ago

KURT What?

MARION Oh, I couldn't possibly tell you It wouldn't be fair!

KURT In that case it'll probably be great for the magazine Save it!

MARION (*frightened*) You won't do anything lurid, will you?

KURT Just print the story—just as you write it—practically as you write it

MARION I'm scared! (*She puts on her cigarette in ash tray on the piano*)

KURT *Nonsense* Here's your first check Two thousand dollars *(He puts the check down on the table in front of her)*

MARION *(wretched suddenly, picks up check, rises, looks at check)* I can't tell you how old this makes me feel!

KURT Suppose I asked you to write a novel! That wouldn't make you feel old, would it? Well, I'm simply asking you to write a novel of your life The only lively reading these days is biography People are bored with fiction It's too tame The fiction-writers haven't the audacity to put down what actually happens to people

MARION You may be disappointed, you know You probably see headlines in your mind The Woman of a Hundred Affairs, The Last of the Great Adventuresses, The Magda Who Wouldn't Go Home I promise you—it won't be a bit like that

KURT We'll announce it next month—first installment the following month O K ?

MARION *(puts down check, paces down right)* Oh dear! I can't promise a thing like that—I really can't

KURT Why not?

MARION It'll worry me too much

KURT Well, don't promise Just get to work

MARION *(faces him)* But what'll I do first?

KURT *(getting up)* Well, if I were you I'd sit down *(She does so help-*

lessly on piano bench KURT then gives her paper, one of his own pencils) There now! You're all set!

MARION *(wailing)*. How can I go out to dinner—how can I ever do anything—with a chapter to write?

KURT After all you don't have to make up anything Just tell what happened to you *(He lights a fresh cigarette)*

MARION Can I use names?

KURT When they're prominent, yes The obscure ones you can fake if you want to Nobody'll know 'em any way

MARION *(looks at him)* Oh what's your name?

KURT *(looks at her)* I told you—my name's Kurt

MARION I know—with a K—I can't call you Kurt! What's your name?

KURT *(sulkily)* Richard

MARION That's better I tell you, Dickie, when I think—when I think—of the funny men I've known they're pretty nearly all brothers under the skin you know, Dickie

KURT Well, that, as they say in the office, is an angle *(Suddenly her fear vanishes and she is overcome with the marvelous possibilities)*

MARION *(jumps up and leans toward him as if to kiss him, but quickly thinks better of it)* Dickie, I think it'll be marvelous! It'll be a knockout And imagine—*(Picking up check)* I'm going to be paid for it! Dickie, you're an angel!

KURT (*sardonically*) That's me Angel Kurt! Well, so long I'll be seeing you (*Starts upstage toward hall door*)

MARION (*suddenly panicky*) Oh, don't go!

KURT You don't think I'm going to sit here and hold your hand while you're remembering your conquests, do you?

MARION Well, you can't go away and leave me like this—alone with my life

KURT Perhaps it's time you got a good, straight, clear-eyed look at it—alone by yourself, without anybody around to hold your hand

MARION (*suddenly*) No I don't want to (*Shrugs her shoulders as if she were cold*) I think it would worry me Besides, I feel superstitious about it

KURT (*following her downstage*) Superstitious!

MARION Yes A kind of—ultimate act After you've written your biography, what else could there possibly be left for you to do?

KURT Collect material for another!

MARION What could you do over again—that wouldn't be repetitious? (*Sits on right arm of sofa right*)

KURT It's repetitious to eat or to make love, isn't it? You keep on doing it

MARION You're cynical!

KURT (*almost spits it out*) You're sentimental.

MARION I am—*Sentimental Journey*—no, that's been used, hasn't it?

KURT Don't worry about a title—I'll get that from the story after you've finished it

MARION There's something about it—I don't know—

KURT What?

MARION Vulgar *Everybody* spouting memoirs Who cares?

KURT Well, wrong hunch! Sorry to have taken your valuable time Good bye

MARION (*the finality frightens her*) What do you mean?

KURT (*he is withering—crosses to her*) I'm prepared to admit I was mistaken—that's all In your desire to escape vulgarity you would probably be—thin You might even achieve refinement I'm not interested Padded episodes hovering on the edge of amour—

MARION (*turns on him*) Young man, you're insufferable!

KURT And you're a false alarm!

MARION (*after a moment*) I congratulate you! You've brought me to the verge of losing my temper! But I tell you this—you're quite mistaken about the character of my life—and about my relations with my friends My story won't be thin and episodic because my life hasn't been thin and episodic And I won't have to pad—the problem will be to select I'm going to write the damn thing just to show you Come in tomorrow afternoon for a cocktail

KURT Whose memoirs are these going to be, yours or mine?

MARION Well, you're an editor, aren't you? (She smiles at him) Come in and edit

KURT All right, I'll come But if you aren't here I'll go away I won't wait a minute
(He goes out quickly **MARION** stands looking after him, inclined to laugh, and yet affected This is a new type even for her)

MARION (she speaks to herself) What an extraordinary young man! (In a moment **KURT** comes back in **MARION** is very glad to see him, greets him as if there had been a long separation) Oh, hello!

KURT (embarrassed) I forgot my hat! (He can't see it at once)

MARION (without moving nor looking away from him, she indicates the hat on the sofa left) There it is! Right next to mine

KURT (crosses for it) Oh yes (Picks up the hat) Thanks (For a moment he stands uncertainly, hat in hand, looking at **MARION** who has not taken her eyes off him He is embarrassed) Well, so long!

MARION So long (**KURT** leaves again She stands as before looking after him She turns toward the piano—sees the check—picks it up and reads it to make sure it's true The whole thing has a slightly fantastic quality to her She is very happy and excited She waves the check in her hand like a pennant and humming she crosses to the piano seat and sits and plays the waltz from

"Danubia" She sees the pad and pencil on the piano and stops playing and, picking up the pencil and the pad, she crosses to the small armchair in the upstage end of the window and sits with her feet on the window seat She repeats the first words of the first chapter aloud to herself as she writes them down) I am born (MINNIE enters from door left to get the tea things she had left on the model stand **MARION** taps the pencil on the pad as she repeats the words) I am born (The time seems remote to her) I am born—I meet Richard Kurt—Well, Minnie, here's the outline—I am born I meet Richard Kurt—now all I have to do is to fill in (MINNIE, used to having irrelevances addressed to her, takes this program rather stolidly)

MINNIE Was, Marion?

MARION (trying to get rid of her) Fix something light, will you, Minnie I'm not going out

MINNIE Aber der Junge kommt!

MARION What Junge?

MINNIE Der Junge dem sie

MARION Oh, yes! The Junge I met on the boat You'll have to send him away I can't go out tonight From now on, Minnie, no more frivolous engagements!

MINNIE (astonished) Sie bleiben ganzen abend zu Hause?

MARION Yes, Minnie I'm spending the evening alone with my life (She remembers **KURT**'s words and repeats them as if, after all, they have

made a profound impression on her)
get a good, straight, clear-eyed
look at it

pfannkuchen!
door left)

(MINNIE exits

MINNIE (*picks up the tea tray and,
bustling toward the kitchen, promis-
ing delights*) Ein fleisch brühe und

MARION (*already brooding over her
past*) I am born

(*Slowly the curtain falls*)

ACT TWO

SCENE—*The same About three weeks later Afternoon*

AT RISE—MARION is putting some touches on the full-length portrait of LEANDER NOLAN which stands away from the audience. She is wearing her working costume, baggy red corduroy trousers, a sash and a worn blue smock over a kind of sweater-jacket. She is very happy. On the piano nearby are her writing things. While touching up LEANDER she is struck by an idea for her book. Puts down her brush and palette and goes to the piano to jot down some notes. The idea pleases her. She giggles to herself. Then she returns to her easel. MINNIE comes in and stands watching her a moment before MARION sees her.

MARION (*sees MINNIE at last*) Oh
yes, Minnie—do you want anything?

MINNIE Ja Gewiss! Das ist vy I vent
to the market

MINNIE You asked me to come right
away, Marion

MARION Well, I've changed my
plans. I'm dining out with Feydie
after all

MARION Did I?

MINNIE (*rising and looking at pic-
ture*) Ach, Gott! (*She studies the
portrait*)

MINNIE Ja (*Sitting on sofa right*)
Zo! You have left a note on the
kitchen. I should come in right away.
I am back from the market

MARION (*looks humorously at MIN-
NIE and puts her arm about MINNIE'S
shoulders*) Gut?

MARION (*studying the portrait*) Of
course I did. That's right, Minnie

MINNIE Ziemlich gut—

MINNIE Well, what did you want,
Marion?

MARION Do you know who it is?

MARION (*washing paint brush in tur-
pentine jar*) Did I tell you there'd be
two for dinner?

MINNIE Oh das sieht man ja gleich.
Das ist Herr Nolan!

MARION (*shaking her hand in grati-
tude*) Thank you, Minnie. (*Door-*

bell rings) See who that is, will you, Minnie?

MINNIE Fraulein ist zu hause?

MARION Ich erwarte Herr Feydak
Für ihn bin ich immer zu hause

MINNIE *(agreeing heartily as she crosses to the door)* Ja, Ja, der Herr Feydak *(MINNIE goes out)*

MARION *jots down a note on the pad which is on the piano FEYDAK enters MINNIE closes the door and exits left*

MARION *(at piano)* Hello, Feydie! Sit down!

FEYDAK Well, my dear, which career do I interrupt?

MARION *(laughing)* I don't know!

FEYDAK One comes to see you with diffidence nowadays *(FEYDAK removes coat and hat and places them on the upstage end of the sofa right, and sits on the left side of the sofa)*

MARION While I'm painting I think of funny things to say, funny phrases It won't be a serious biography, thank God I'm dedicating it to Vicki "To Vicki—the gayest person I have ever known!" By the way, have you got any little snapshots of Vicki—all I've got are formal photographs with his orders I'd like to get something a little more intimate

FEYDAK I'll hunt some up for you

MARION Have you heard from the Powers yet, when you are to leave?

FEYDAK Tomorrow

MARION *(stricken—sits right of him)* Feydie!

FEYDAK *(fatalistically)*. Tomorrow. *(They sit)* I shall leave you with sorrow, Marion.

MARION I'll have no one to laugh with

FEYDAK For me it's an exile

MARION You'll have a wonderful time I shall miss you terribly

FEYDAK Perhaps you'll come out

MARION Perhaps I will I've always wanted to go to China If I have enough money left from all my labors I'll stop in on you—en route to China

FEYDAK That would be marvelous

MARION You know writing one's life has a sobering effect on one—you get it together and you think "Well! look at the damn thing "

FEYDAK Do you want to be impressive?

MARION Well, I don't want to be trivial

FEYDAK I think you escape that.

MARION My friendships haven't been trivial *(She gives his hand a squeeze)*

FEYDAK Have you seen that bombastic young man?

MARION Oh, yes He comes in every once in a while to see how I'm getting on He's quite insulting Underneath his arrogance I suspect he's very uncertain

FEYDAK Oh, now, don't tell me he has an inferiority complex!

MARION. Well, I think he has!

FEYDAK. I don't believe it.

FEYDAK The new psychology is very confusing. In my simple day you said "That young man is bumptious and insufferable" and you dismissed him. Now you say "He has an inferiority complex" and you encourage him to be more bumptious and more insufferable. It's very confusing.

MARION There's a kind of honesty about him that I like.

FEYDAK (*instantly putting two and two together*) Oh!

MARION Nothing like that, Feydie! As a matter of fact—I don't mind telling you—I like him very much—

FEYDAK I think he is destined

MARION He's not interested. He's some kind of fanatic. Social, I think I've met that kind in Russia—quite unassailable. But I'm optimistic (*They laugh*). Well, one must never despair, must one? Life is so much more resourceful and resilient than one is oneself. Three weeks ago when you came to see me I felt quite at the end of my rope. I didn't tell you quite but I actually didn't know which way to turn. I felt tired too—which troubled me. Well, now I find myself, quite suddenly, (*She indicates portrait*) doing Leander and—(*She indicates manuscript on piano*) doing myself. New Vista. Very exciting.

FEYDAK All this enthusiasm for art alone?

MARION (*laughing*) Of course!—Feydie, what did you think?

MARION Come here and have a look at Leander!

FEYDAK (*he rises—walks to the canvas on the easel*) Him! Formall!

MARION It's to hang in the White House (*She winks at him, he laughs, puts his arm around her shoulder*)

FEYDAK Marion, you're adorable! (*They walk downstage together, their arms around each other's shoulders, very affectionately*)

MARION Oh, Feydie, I'm having a wonderful time. Quiet too. Writing enforces silence and solitude on one. I've always lived in such a rush—a kind of interminable scherzo . . .

FEYDAK Good title!

MARION Think so? I'll put it down. (*Writes on pad on piano*) FEYDAK sits on right arm of sofa left, facing her) Interminable scherzo. How do you spell it? A little affected. Might do for a chapter heading maybe. (*Returns to him—sitting on model stand—facing him*) But I realize now I haven't in years had time to stop and think. I sit here for hours, Feydie, and nothing comes to me. Then, suddenly, the past will come in on me with such a rush—odd, remote, semi-forgotten things of the past. Are they true? How much is true? One can never be sure, can one? I remember certain griefs and fears. I remember their existence without recalling at all their intensity—their special anguish. Why? What was the matter with me? What made them so acute? It is like recalling a landscape with

(at color, a kind of color-blindness of the memory (Doorbell rings She calls out to her factotum) Minnie! (MINNIE enters left and crosses rapidly to hall door MARION arranges the model stand on which stands the papal armchair in red and gold) This is probably the Hon Nolan He's due for a sitting He pretends he doesn't like to have his picture painted, but I know he does (MINNIE enters from hallway. She is flustered and giggly)

MINNIE (very high-pitched voice). Herr Varvick Vilson!

MARION Typni Wilson!

MINNIE (to FEYDAK) Der film start!

FEYDAK So?

MINNIE (radiant) Jal Jal

MARION Oh, Feydie, you'll adore this Ask him in, Minnie

MINNIE (as she goes out to admit WILSON) Gott, ist er schon!

MARION Warwick's public

FEYDAK And mine!

MARION (in a quick whisper) Whatever you do—outstay him! (MINNIE has opened the door and WARWICK WILSON enters He is very handsome, explosively emotional, and given to cosmic generalization He is in evening clothes, a red carnation in his buttonhole)

WILSON (crossing to MARION and kissing her hand) Marion!

MARION Warwick!

WILSON Darling! How are you?

MARION. I'm splendid Been up all night?

WILSON No, no! This is business. (MINNIE has crossed to kitchen door upper left, never taking her eyes from WILSON)

MARION This is Mr Feydak Mr Warwick Wilson, the famous film star

WILSON (crosses to sofa and shakes hands with FEYDAK—dramatically) Feydak! The Mr Feydak?

FEYDAK (again mistaken for his brother) Ja

WILSON I've heard of you indeed!

FEYDAK Have you? Thanks

MARION Mr Feydak is on his way to Hollywood He is to write the music for

WILSON (sits on the model stand—facing front) Of course! I am honored, Mr Feydak—deeply honored That unforgettable waltz—how does it go? (He starts to hum with a swaying gesture the waltz from the "Merry Widow") Music's my one passion!

MARION Once you said it was me.

WILSON A lot of good it did me!

MARION (to WILSON) Well, tell me (She sees MINNIE, who is still staring at WILSON) Look at Minnie The mere sight of you has upset her so that she's speechless

MINNIE Aber, Fraulein! (WILSON rises graciously and gives MINNIE a friendly wave of the hand.

He's no snob. MINNIE, speechless with delight, exits left)
(WILSON returns to his position on the model stand)

MARION All right, Minnie! Warwick, Warwick! You mustn't do things like that to Minnie, at her age!

WILSON (*tragically*) There you are! This face! This cursed face! I should go masked really. One has no private life!

MARION (*sits in throne chair on model stand*) What would you do with it if you had it, eh, Tymp?

WILSON (*delighted*) That nickname!

MARION It just rolled off my tongue. Did I call you that?

WILSON You did! You invented it. No one's called me that since you left Hollywood. And you promised to explain the significance to me, but you never did.

MARION Did it have a significance?

FEYDAK Marion has a knack for nicknames.

MARION I love 'em. I'd like to do a chapter on nicknames.

WILSON (*highly pleased*) Tymp! Tymp! (*Very patronizing to FEYDAK*) You are an intuitive person, Mr Feydak. I can see that. (*FEYDAK ad libs "Danke schon"*) Can you imagine what she meant?

FEYDAK Her vagaries are beyond me, Mr Wilson.

WILSON (*leaning back toward MARION*) Speak, Oracle! No! Don't tell me now. Put it into that book you're writing.

MARION (*MARION and FEYDAK exchange glances*) How things get around.

WILSON It's been in the back of my mind for years, Marion, to have you paint me. Now that we're both in town together.

MARION Well, I'd love to.

WILSON In the costume of the Dane. (*MARION and FEYDAK exchange a look. Strikes a pose*) I'd like to be done in his costume. I hope, Mr Feydak, that they won't break your spirit in Hollywood as they've all most broken mine!

FEYDAK (*with a smile*) My spirit is indestructible!

WILSON (*rises and crosses to rear of sofa and pats FEYDAK on the back*) I'm glad to hear it. (*Returns to left of model stand and stands with his right foot on it*) You know, for years I've been begging them to do Shakespeare. (*Gesticulates*)

MARION (*interrupting him*) Sit down and be comfortable.

WILSON They simply won't listen. But I'm going to give up acting and produce!

MARION Oh, good God! Don't do that!

WILSON. Why not?

MARION What would Minnie do with her night off?

WILSON (smiles) My public, eh?

MARION Yes!

WILSON Quite so! (Patronizingly) You artists who work in media like painting or literature— (To FEYDAK) or music, that too is a beautiful art, Mr Feydak—transcends speech—transcends everything, by saying nothing it says all

FEYDAK Ja!
(The doorbell rings)

WILSON You are certainly lucky compared to us poor actors We— (MINNIE enters and crosses to hall door upper center) Wouldn't it be ironic if all that remained of me after I am gone were your painting of me? That is why I want it, perhaps—my poor grasp on immortality

FEYDAK You see, Marion, you confer immortality!

MARION I think immortality is an overrated commodity But tell me, Tympi, what are you doing away from Hollywood?

MINNIE (comes in announcing) Der Herr Nolan! (MINNIE then looks at WILSON WILSON stands—looks at MINNIE)

MARION Show him in Show him in (With a lingering look at WILSON, MINNIE goes back To others, after watching MINNIE exit) You see!

FEYDAK The effect is instantaneous—like music .
(NOLAN enters MINNIE follows NOLAN in and exits into kitchen, murmuring ecstatically, "Gott! Ist er schön!", looking at WILSON)

MARION Hello, Bunny. (Introducing NOLAN) You know Mr. Feydak. Mr Nolan, this is Warwick Wilson, you've heard of him
(FEYDAK bows to NOLAN, who returns the bow)

WILSON It's a pleasure, Mr Nolan I've heard of you indeed! (The shake hands)

MARION You're late for your sitting, Bunny Will the presence of these gentlemen embarrass you? I don't mind if you don't

NOLAN (has entered rather worried and angry He has a magazine rolled in his hand He now speaks very irritably). As a matter of fact, Marion . .

MARION (putting him in throne chair on model stand) Oh, sit down, like a good fellow! The light is getting bad (NOLAN sits WILSON sits on the right arm of the sofa left on which FEYDAK is sitting MARION gets to work on BUNNY) How did you find me, Tympi?

WILSON I read in a magazine that you were barging into literature .

NOLAN (half rising, showing magazine) This is true then!

MARION Don't get up, Bunny (Nevertheless she takes the magazine and looks at it) Well, Dickie has gone and spread himself, hasn't he? (She sits on sofa left between WILSON and FEYDAK) Look here, Feydie! (Shows him the full-page announcement of her book in magazine)

FEYDAK (looking) Do you think you can live up to this?

MARION Why will they write this sort of thing? *(Rises and goes back)* Makes me out a kind of female Casanova *(She drops the magazine on the stand at NOLAN's feet)* Well, they'll be disappointed

NOLAN *(bitterly)* Will they?

MARION Bunny! *(But she thinks nothing of it—merely pushes him into a better light)*

FEYDAK *(tactfully—he senses danger)* May I ask, Mr Wilson—are you making a picture at the moment?

WILSON No, I'm in New York making some personal appearances

MARION Personal appearances I love that phrase Has such an air of magnanimity about it *(Crosses to painting)*

WILSON Pretty boring, I can tell you! I've got winter's cramp signing autograph books It's a perfect martyrdom I assure you It's no fun at all *(WILSON crosses to stand—puts his right foot on it, leans on his knee with his right arm and studies NOLAN, his face not six inches away from NOLAN's NOLAN fidgets)*

MARION I can imagine! What's the matter, Bunny? You seem under a strain today . . . not relaxed

NOLAN *(bursting out and glaring at all of them)* It's like being watched while you're taking a bath!

MARION Oh, I'm so sorry, Bunny!

FEYDAK *(rising)* I quite sympathize with Mr Nolan.

WILSON *(moves away)* Supposing I were so shy, eh, Mr Nolan?

FEYDAK *(crosses to MARION who is above her easel, right)* I'm off, Marion *(Kisses her hand)* Auf wiedersehen!

MARION *(meaningfully)* You'll have to go—*(WILSON sits again on arm of sofa left)* both of you

WILSON *(rises)* I was just going myself My next appearance is at 6 45 *(Speaks to others)*

FEYDAK *(to help her)* Perhaps I can drop you, Mr Wilson

WILSON *(faces FEYDAK)* No, I'll drop you *(Turns to MARION)* I say, Marion *(FEYDAK, helpless, goes upstage putting on coat)*

MARION Yes, Tympi?

WILSON If you started my portrait right away and it turns out—I am sure it will turn out—you might put it in your book, mightn't you? I'm frankly sick of just appearing in fan magazines

MARION We'll see Why not?

WILSON Splendid! Don't fail to come tonight Good-bye, dearest Marion Good-bye again, Mr Nolan. *(He starts to shake NOLAN's hand but is interrupted by MARION, almost screaming)*

MARION No, no, no! Don't do that—don't touch him

WILSON Most happy! See you later *(He waves himself off at last—MARION returns to her easel)*

MARION *(to FEYDAK)* Don't forget—I'm dining with you

FEYDAK (*like the player in "Hamlet" who burlesques Polonius*) Most bappy—see you later (FEYDAK leaves)

MARION (*with relief*) Now then

NOLAN (*muttering to himself*) Silly ass!

MARION (*working on painting*) That young man is one of the most famous people in the world, do you realize that, Bunny? His profile follows you all over Europe—and Asia Ubiquitous profile Have you ever seen him?

NOLAN (*unswerved*) He's a silly ass!

MARION I admit he's somewhat on that side—but that other one—that Feydie—he's the darling of the world!

NOLAN (*very short—bitterly*) Evidently!

MARION (*surprised*) Bunny!

NOLAN (*savage now*) Who isn't a darling? Everyone's a darling as far as I can see! The world's full of darlings Your world at any rate

MARION But, darling (*She suddenly stops—sits at right end of sofa right*) Oh, Bunny, I remember now!

NOLAN You remember what?

MARION Tympi! Why I nicknamed him Tympi Don't you see?

NOLAN No, I don't see

MARION For tympanum—a large instrument in the orchestra producing

a hollow sound (*She beats an imaginary drum with her paint brush*) Boom! (*Suddenly NOLAN quits the pose*) What is it?

NOLAN I can't sit today I'm not in the mood

MARION I could tell there was something worrying you

NOLAN There is something worrying me!

MARION Well, what is it?

NOLAN This confounded story! Are you really writing it?

MARION Well, yes—I am

NOLAN What do you intend to tell?

MARION Well, that's a rather difficult question to answer—it's like asking me what I've been doing all my life

NOLAN When does this biography start?

MARION (*beginning to wonder about this questioning*) With my birth—coincidence, isn't it?

NOLAN All the time back home—when you were a girl in Knoxville?

MARION Yes, of course I've had a wonderful time going back over it all

NOLAN Everything?

MARION Everything I can remember

NOLAN Do I come into it?

MARION (*smiling to herself*) You do! You certainly do!

NOLAN You must leave me out of that story!

MARION But Bunny, how can I possibly leave you out?

NOLAN You must, that's all!

MARION But how can I? You were too important—think of the rôle you played in my life. By your own confession, Bunny darling, you—you started me. That's a good idea for a chapter heading, isn't it? "Bunny Starts Me." I must put that down.

NOLAN This is no joke, Marion. (With menace) I warn you.

MARION Warn me! Let me understand you. Are you seriously asking me to give up an opportunity like this just because

NOLAN (rises and gets down from the model stand. Speaks with brutal command) Opportunity! Cheap exhibitionism! A chance to flaunt your affairs in a rag like this. (Indicating magazine on piano) I won't be drawn into it. I can tell you that! (He is in a towering rage.)

MARION (after a pause) I know that by your standards, Bunny, I'm a loose character. But there are other standards, there just are.

NOLAN (crosses to center—drops magazine on model stand) Not in Tennessee!

MARION (rises) I'm afraid you're provincial, Bunny.

NOLAN I'm sorry.

MARION (takes off her smock, crosses to small table down right, gets her

notes, then crosses to desk upper right) I don't care what the advertisements say about my story—I know what I'm writing.

NOLAN I'm sorry.

MARION That's all right. (But this has gone pretty deep.)

NOLAN (after a pause) If you're doing this for money— (She turns and watches him) I know you've been pretty hard up—I promise you I'll get you commissions enough to more than make up for this story. I was talking about you only the other day to my prospective father-in-law. He's a big man, you know. I am sure I can get him to sit for you.

MARION The tip isn't big enough.

NOLAN (scared now that he sees the extent to which he has hurt her) Marion!

MARION It amuses me to write my life. I am pleasure-loving—you know that—I will therefore pass up the opportunity of painting your big father-in-law. I will even give up the pleasure of painting you. And we can part friends, then, can't we? (She reaches out her hand to him.) Good bye, Bunny.

NOLAN (devastated) Marion—you can't do this to me—you can't send me away like this.

MARION I don't think I've ever in my life had a vulgar quarrel with anyone. This is the nearest I've come to it. I'm a little annoyed with you for that. I think it's better we part now while we can still do so with some—dignity. Shall we?

NOLAN. You don't realize what's involved—or you wouldn't talk like that . . .

MARION What is involved?

NOLAN My entire career That's what's involved.

MARION Oh!

NOLAN This is the most critical moment of my life My fiancée's father is the most powerful leader of opinion in my state Frankly, I depend on him for support To have this kind of thing banded about now might cause a permanent rift between him and me—might seriously interfere, not only with my candidacy for the Senate, but with my marriage

MARION They are interlocking—I quite understand

NOLAN A revelation of this kind—coming at this moment—might be fatal

MARION Revelation! You make me feel like—I can't tell you what you make me feel like (She laughs—semihysterically)

NOLAN (sepulchral) You must give this up, Marion

MARION I've met distinguished men abroad — politicians, statesmen — a Prime Minister even—and this kind of "revelation"—as you so luridly call it—is no more to them than a theme for after-dinner banter They take it in their stride My God, Bunny, you take it so big!

NOLAN These people I'm depending on to elect me aren't sophisticated

like you or me. (MARION looks at NOLAN with some surprise) What I mean is—they're country people essentially—my future father-in-law is sympathetic to their point of view.

MARION Tell me—your father-in-law, is he the man with the chest expansion?

NOLAN He's a fine sturdy man—as you perhaps know, he makes a fetish of exercise

MARION (bubbling again) You see his pictures in shorts in health magazines

NOLAN There's no disgrace in that

MARION (sits on right arm of sofa left) It doesn't shock me, Bunny I was just identifying him, that's all

NOLAN I owe everything to Kinnicott—I wouldn't be running for the Senate right now if not for him I can't risk offending him

MARION What the devil's happened to you anyway? You used to be quite a nice boy—even fun occasionally

NOLAN (wistful—turns away) Maybe—if you had stuck to me

MARION Ts! Ts! Ts! Poor Bunny I'm sorry for you Really I am (She strokes his arm)

NOLAN (suddenly passionate—faces her) Don't touch me!

MARION (amazed) Bunny!

NOLAN Do you think I'm not human!

MARION Well, if you aren't the most contradictory .

NOLAN. I realized the moment I came in here the other day—the moment I saw you

MARION (*interrupting*) But Bunny! You're engaged and you're going to be a Senator

NOLAN (*walks away from her*) Forget it! Forget I ever said it.

MARION You bewilder me . .

NOLAN (*bitterly*) I'm not surprised I bewilder you You've spent your life among a lot of foreign counts It's well known that foreigners are more immoral than we are

MARION I'm very touched I am really (*She kisses him in a friendly way*)

NOLAN Don't do that! I forbid you!

MARION All right I'll never attack you again, I promise

NOLAN I wish I had never come back into your life—it was a terrible mistake—you'd forgotten me

MARION (*seriously*) Oh, you're wrong First love—one doesn't forget that

NOLAN (*passionately*) But you did! You forgot me! And if you got the chance again, you'd humiliate me again

MARION Humiliate! What queer notions you have— Is it a question of pride or vanity between us? We're old friends—friends

NOLAN (*moves a step right*) Please forget this—I don't know what came over me—I . .

MARION. Of course. There's nothing to forget (*Moves a step toward him*) It's quite all right, dear (*She pats him on his hand*) Oh, excuse me

NOLAN I warn you, Marion—I solemnly warn you—if you persist in this—

MARION Never in my life have I seen a man vacillate so between passion and threat

NOLAN I shall find ways to stop you Mr Kinnicott, my future father-in-law, is a powerful man

MARION I know Extraordinary biceps

NOLAN I warn you, Marion This matter is beyond flippancy

MARION (*sits*) There'll be some very distinguished people in my biography You needn't be ashamed

NOLAN That movie-actor!

MARION Tympi in Hamlet costume—you in a toga I'll print your portraits on opposite pages—my two men!

NOLAN You are malicious!

MARION I must admit, Bunny, that you provoke in me all my malicious impulses You come here suddenly and you convey to me what I've missed in not marrying you (*The back-door bell rings MINNIE crosses to answer it during MARION'S speech*) You dangle before me the inventory of your felicities—a career, a fortune, a fabulous bride—and then, because I get a chance to chronicle my own adventures—you object—you tell me

I mustn't! I have a nice nature, Bunny, or I should be angry—I should be indignant

(KURT enters)

NOLAN (*sharply and with threat*)
Now, Marion, I've warned you
You'll regret this

MARION Hello, Dickie, do talk to Bunny for a minute, will you? (*Crosses to the stairs and starts up them to her bedroom*) I've simply got to change (*MINNIE enters up center and exits left*) Feydie's coming to take me out to dinner

NOLAN But, Marion

MARION I couldn't do anything about this in any case, Bunny dear, because I've promised Dickie. In fact, I signed something, didn't I, Dickie? Don't go away, either of you (*MARION blows them a kiss and exits into her bedroom. A pause between the two men. KURT crosses downstage to above the model stand. Suddenly, NOLAN goes to KURT and reaches out his hand to him*)

NOLAN How do you do, young man?

KURT (*very much surprised*) How do you do? (*He looks at him narrowly, his head a little on one side, a terrier appraising a mastiff*)

NOLAN I am very glad to see you

KURT Isn't that nice ?

NOLAN You may be surprised to learn that on the one occasion when we met you made quite an impression on me

KURT Did I?

NOLAN (*sits on sofa right*) You did sit down. In fact—I hope you don't mind—if you will allow me as a prerogative of seniority—to ask you a few questions. I have a purpose in mind and not—I trust—an idle purpose

KURT Shoot! (*Sits*) Anything to enlighten the professor! (*He knows he is going to be pumped and has decided to be casual, naive and even respectful*)

NOLAN (*clearing his throat*) Now then—your present position on the magazine you represent—have you been on it long?

KURT About two years

NOLAN And before that?

KURT Newspaper work

NOLAN And before that?

KURT Tramping around the world. Odd jobs. Quite a variety.

NOLAN College?

KURT Believe it or not—Yale—two years. worked my way through—washed dishes

NOLAN Very interesting preparation very interesting. Tell me now—your present work—do you find it interesting? Is the remuneration satisfactory?

KURT Two hundred smackers a week. That's twice what I've ever earned in my life before

NOLAN Now then—to come to the point—no doubt you've heard of my

prospective father-in-law, Mr Orm Kinnicott?

KURT Heard of him! We pay him the compliment of imitation. He is our model, our criterion, our guiding star!

NOLAN As you know, Mr Kinnicott's interests are varied. He owns some powerful newspapers in my state. The other day I heard him say that he wanted a new man in Washington.

KURT (*playing naively excited*) Now that's something to give one's eye-teeth for!

NOLAN (*pleased at the result*) I think it might be possible to swing it—very possible.

KURT God, what a break!

NOLAN As it happens, Mr Kinnicott is at present in town. I shall arrange an appointment for you in the next few days. Naturally, I expect you to keep the matter entirely confidential.

KURT Naturally! You needn't worry on that score, Senator, I assure you.

NOLAN Thank you, Mr Kurt. That is all I ask. (*A pause*)

KURT Mr Nolan—do you mind if I ask you something?

NOLAN Certainly not.

KURT You won't consider me impertinent?

NOLAN (*with a smile*) I don't object to impertinence, Mr Kurt. I was often considered impertinent myself when I was your age.

KURT Why are you making me this offer?

NOLAN I am not making you an offer. I shall merely attempt to expedite.

KURT Why? The first time we met we didn't exactly hit it off, now, did we? Why then are you going to all this trouble?

NOLAN I have discussed you with Miss Froude, who is an old friend of mine and whose opinion I greatly respect. She thinks very highly of you, Mr Kurt. My own impression.

KURT (*inexorably*) Why? What, as they say, is the pay-off?

NOLAN I'll tell you. I'll tell you quite frankly. I don't want Miss Froude's autobiography, which you have persuaded her to write, to appear in your magazine. I want it killed!

KURT Oh! You want it killed?

NOLAN Exactly.

KURT Why?

NOLAN Marion knows why. We needn't go into that.

KURT (*wounded by a sudden and devastating jealousy*) Good God! You! You too!
(*MARION enters from balcony. She is wearing a dove-colored evening dress—the gamine transformed into lady-of-the-world*)

MARION Well! How have you two boys been getting on? What do you think?

KURT (*seething. Crosses to foot of stairs*) I'll tell you what I think

MARION About the dress I mean
(*She does a turn for them*)

NOLAN (*without looking up at her or the dress. He is watching KURT*)
It's charming

MARION Thank you, Bunny. With all his faults, Bunny is much more satisfactory than you are, Dickie.

KURT (*at boiling point*) He's chivalrous, he is! His chivalry is so exquisite that he has just been attempting to bribe me to keep your story from being published. His gallantry is so delicate that he's terrified about being mentioned in it.

MARION (*comes down stairs during KURT's speech*) Don't be so worked up about it, Dickie. You're another one who takes it big. It's catching!

KURT (*flaring at her*) You're not very sensitive.

MARION Why should I be? You misapprehend Bunny. If he doesn't want to be in the same story with me that's his business. And it's nothing to do with chivalry or gallantry or nonsense like that.

NOLAN Marion—this young man .

KURT (*taunting him*) What about Washington, Mr. Nolan? Mr. Nolan, a prospective Senator, offers to bribe me with a post in Washington controlled by his prospective father-in-law.

MARION If it's a good job, take it, Dickie, by all means .

KURT I am afraid, Marion, that your code is more relaxed than mine.

MARION Code, nonsense! I gave up codes long ago. I'm a big laissez-faire girl!

NOLAN If this young man is an example of the distinguished company you've come to associate with, Marion .

MARION Don't quarrel, children—please. It distresses me.

NOLAN He's extremely objectionable.

KURT What about Washington, now, Senator? Are you still willing to expedite . . .
(*KURT and NOLAN stand glaring at each other. MARION tries to calm the troubled waters. Crosses to NOLAN.*)

MARION Really, Dickie, you're very naughty. Don't mind him, Bunny. He's very young.

KURT And incorruptible!

NOLAN Marion, I claim the privilege of a friendship that antedates Mr. Kurt's by some years, to beg you, very solemnly, not to prostitute your talents to his contemptible, sensation-mongering rag.

KURT (*faces them*) There's a Senatorial sentence!

MARION Hush, Dickie, hush! Bunny darling, it's true that Dickie's magazine isn't the Edinburgh Review. On the other hand, your assumption that my story will be vulgar and sensational is a little gratuitous, isn't it?

NOLAN You refuse then?

MARION (*gently but with a serious overtone*) Yes This—censorship before publication seems to me, shall we say, unfair It is—even in an old friend—dictatorial

NOLAN (*with an air of finality*) You leave me then no alternative I am very sorry

KURT Don't let him frighten you, Marion, he can't do anything

NOLAN I can forgive you anything, Marion, but the fact that you value my wishes below those of this insolent young man

MARION But this insolent young man hasn't anything to do with it! Can't you see, Bunny—it's my own wish that is involved

NOLAN I have explained to you the special circumstances If you would consent to delay publication till after election

(*She turns to KURT to ask him to make this concession but can't get a word in She is wedged between both of them*)

KURT She has nothing to do with the publication date That's my province Gosh, what a chance for the circulation manager in Tennessee! (*He rubs his palms together in mock anticipation of profits*)

NOLAN (*losing his temper at last*) You are tampering with more than you bargain for Mr — Mr —

KURT Kurt

MARION With a "K"

NOLAN There are ways of dealing with a young man like this and you'll soon find out what they are!

KURT. Them's harsh words, Senator!

NOLAN You wait and see

MARION Bunny!

NOLAN Don't speak to me! I never want to see you again! (*He goes out*)

MARION (*really distressed*) This is awful!

KURT (*highly elated*) It's wonderful!

MARION But I'm very fond of Bunny Oh dear! I'll telephone him to-night

KURT (*grimly*) Over my dead body!

MARION Can it be, Dickie, that I control the election of Senators from Tennessee? (*Sits at right end of sofa left*)

KURT (*after a moment*) How could you ever have loved a stuffed shirt like that?

MARION He wasn't a stuffed shirt That's the funny part He was charming He was a charming boy Rather thin Rather reticent He was much nicer than you, as a matter of fact

KURT I'm sure he was!

MARION He was much less violent!

KURT (*sits*) Hypocritical old buccaneer!

MARION He used to work hard all day and at night he studied law We used to walk the country lanes and dream about the future He was scared—he was wistful. How did he

emerge into this successful, ambitious, overcautious—mediocrity? How do we all emerge into what we are? How did I emerge into what I am? I've dug up some of my old diaries. I was a tremulous young girl. I was eager. I believe I was naive. Look at me now! Time, Dickie. What will you be at forty? A bondholder and a commuter. Oh, Dickie!

KURT (*tensely*) I'll never be forty!

MARION (*laughing*) How will you avoid it?

KURT (*same tone*) I'll use myself up before I'm forty.

MARION Do you think so? I don't think so. (*Rises*) I sometimes wake up on certain mornings feeling absolutely — immortal! Indestructible! One is perpetually reborn, I think, Dickie. Everyone should write one's life, I think—but not for publication. For oneself. A kind of spiritual Spring-cleaning!

KURT The Ego preening. I

MARION (*sitting on right arm of sofa left*) Well, why not? After all, one's ego is all one really has.

KURT Reminiscence is easy. So is anticipation. It's the *present* that's difficult and most people are too lazy or too indifferent to cope with it.

MARION It's natural for you to say that—at your age one has no past and no future either, because the intimation of the future comes only with the sense of the past.

KURT (*with sudden bitterness*) I see the past as an *evil thing*—to be extirpated.

MARION How awful! (*Pause*) Why?

KURT That's not important.

MARION (*rises*) You freeze up so whenever I try to find out anything about you. I'm not used to that. Usually people open up to me—I'm a born confidante. But not you. I'm interested too, because in an odd way I've become very fond of you.

KURT My life's very dull, I assure you. My past lacks completely what you would call *glamour*.

MARION No, Dickie. I don't believe that. I don't believe that's true of anybody's life.

KURT Well, it's true. Moreover it's true of most people's lives. It's easy for anyone who's lived as you have to make romantic generalizations. It's very pleasant for you to believe them. Well, I shan't disillusion you. (*Turns away from her*) Why should I? It's not important. (*She is sitting down, smoking a cigarette in a holder, watching him. He becomes conscious that she is studying him.*)

MARION I had no idea you felt this way about me—you despise me, don't you? (*He doesn't answer*) Don't you?

KURT Yes.

MARION Why?

KURT (*rises. Walks away*) Why did we start this?

MARION You're annoyed at having even momentarily revealed yourself,

aren't you? I'll have your secret, Dickie—I'll pluck out the heart of your mystery

KURT Secret! Mystery! More romantic nonsense I have no secret No-body has a secret There are different kinds of greed, different kinds of ambition—that's all!

MARION Oh, you simplify too much—really I'm afraid you do Tell me—why do you disapprove of me? Is it—as Bunny does—on moral grounds?

KURT (*right end of sofa left—angrily*) You're superficial and casual and irresponsible You take life, which is a tragic thing, as though it were a trivial bedroom farce You're a second-rate artist who's acquired a reputation through vamping celebrities to sit for you

MARION (*quietly, she continues smoking*) Go on

KURT As an unglamorous upstart who has been forced to make my way I resent parasitism, that's all!

MARION Isn't there in biology something about benevolent parasites, Dickie? Many great men, I believe, owe a debt of gratitude to their parasites, as many plants do there are varieties Again, Dickie, you simplify unduly It is a defect of the radical and the young

KURT To return to the Honorable Nolan

MARION I return to him with relief

KURT He may exert pressure on us, you know

MARION How? I'm very interested

KURT Well, for one thing, his future father-in-law might get me fired

MARION Could he do that?

KURT He might He might easily (*MARION sits upright and looks at him*) Some form of bribery He might go to my chief and offer him a bigger job—anything

MARION All on account of my poor little biography— It seems incredible that anyone would take all this trouble

KURT I'd just like to see them try—I'd just like to, that's all

MARION What would you do?

KURT Do? I'd make the Honorable Nolan the laughing stock of the country, and his athletic father-in-law too I'd just plaster them, that's what I'd do

MARION You sound vindictive

KURT Baby, I am vindictive!

MARION Funny, I'm just amused

KURT Well, everything's a spectacle to you! (*Turns away from her*) God, how I hate detachment!

MARION Your desire to break up Bunny is quite impersonal then

KURT Surgical Just as impersonal as that

MARION You're a funny boy, Dickie

KURT (*turns away from her*) I'm not funny and I'm not a boy. You've

been around with dilettantes so long you don't recognize seriousness when you see it

MARION But it's the serious people who are funny, Dickie! Look at Bunny

KURT (*faces her*) Yes, look at him! An epitome of the brainless muddle of contemporary life, of all the self-seeking second-raters who rise to power and wield power That's why I'm going to do him in (*The phone rings—for a moment they pay no attention to it*) It's the most beautiful chance anybody ever had and I'd just like to see them try and stop me (*Phone keeps ringing MARION answers it*)

MARION Yes yes certainly (*To KURT—a bit surprised*) It's for you (*She hands him hand-receiver*)

KURT (*takes phone and talks from rear of sofa*) Yes Hello sure Well, what about it? Oh, you want to talk to me about it, do you? I thought you would I'll be around sure so long (*He hangs up*) They've begun! (*He is almost gay with the heady scent of battle*)

MARION What do you mean?

KURT That was my chief He wants to talk to me about your story Kinnicott's begun to put the screws on him He's going to ask me to kill it All right—I'll kill it!

MARION (*faintly*) I can't believe it

KURT Neff's had a call from the father-in-law .

MARION Did he say so?

KURT No, but you can bet he has!

MARION I must say this puts my back up

KURT I'll make a fight for it to keep my job But if he's stubborn I'll tell him to go to hell—and go to a publisher with your manuscript And if I don't get quick action that way I'll publish it myself—I'll put every penny I've saved into it .

MARION But why should you? Why does it mean so much to you?

KURT Do you think I'd miss a chance like this?— It'll test the calibre of our magazines, of our press our Senators, our morality

MARION All on account of my poor little story—how Vicki would have laughed!

KURT (*a spasm of jealousy again*) Who's Vicki?

MARION (*aware of it*) An old friend to whom I'm dedicating the biography

KURT Yeah! (*Sits beside her then speaks*) Where is he now?

MARION He's dead (*A pause She gets up and crosses to center*) I've always rather despised these contemporary women who publicize their emotions (*Another moment She walks upstage She is thinking aloud*) And here I am doing it myself Too much self-revelation these days Loud speakers in the confessional Why should I add to the noise? I think, as far as this story is concerned, I'll call it a day, Dickie.

KURT What!

MARION Let's forget all about it, shall we?

KURT If you let me down now, I'll hate you

MARION. Will you? Why won't you take me into your confidence then? Why won't you tell me about yourself? What are you after?

KURT (*after a moment of inhibition decides to reveal his secret dream*) My ambition is to be critic-at-large of things-as-they-are I want to find out everything there is to know about the intimate structure of things I want to reduce the whole system to absurdity I want to laugh the powers-that-be out of existence in a great winnowing gale of laughter

MARION That's an interesting research Of course it strikes me it's vitiated by one thing—you have a preconceived idea of what you will find In a research biased like that from the start you are apt to overlook much that is noble and generous and gentle

KURT (*challenging and bitter*) Have you found generosity and gentleness and nobility?

MARION A good deal—yes

KURT Well, I haven't!

MARION I'm sorry for you

KURT You needn't be. Reserve your pity for weaklings I don't need it!

MARION Are you so strong? (*A pause KURT doesn't answer*) How old are you, Dickie?

KURT (*turns away*) What difference does that make?

MARION Who do you live with?

KURT I live alone

MARION Are you in love with anybody?

KURT No

MARION Where are your parents?

KURT They're dead

MARION Long?

KURT My mother is I hardly remember her Just barely remember her

MARION Your father? (*He doesn't answer*) Do you remember your father?

KURT (*in a strange voice*) Yes I remember him all right

MARION What did your father do?

KURT He was a coal miner

MARION Oh! Won't you tell me about him? I'd like to know

KURT I was a kid of fourteen There was a strike One day my father took me out for a walk Sunny spring morning We stopped to listen to an organizer My father was a mild little man with kind of faded, tired blue eyes We stood on the outskirts of the crowd My father was holding me by the hand Suddenly somebody shouted "The militia!" There was a shot Everybody scattered. My father

was bewildered—he didn't know which way to turn. A second later he crumpled down beside me. He was bleeding. He was still holding my hand. He died like that. (A moment. He concludes harshly—coldly—like steel.) Are there any other glamorous facts of my existence you would like to know?

MARION (stirred to her heart) You poor boy. I knew there was something. I knew.

KURT (hard and ironic) It's trivial really. People exaggerate the importance of human life. One has to die. (Turns to her) The point is to have fun while you're alive, isn't it? Well, you've managed. I congratulate you!

MARION (her heart full) Dickie darling—why are you so bitter against me? Why against me?

KURT Do you want to know that too? Well, it's because. (His voice rises. She suddenly doesn't want him to speak.)

MARION Hush, dearest—hush—don't say any more—I understand—not any more. (His defenses vanish suddenly. He sinks to his knees beside her, his arms around her.)

KURT Marion, my angel!

MARION (infinitely compassionate, stroking his hair) Dickie—Dickie—Dickie. Why have you been afraid to love me?

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

SCENE—The same

TIME—Late afternoon. Two weeks later

The telephone is ringing as the curtain rises. There is a moment and MINNIE enters and crosses to rear of the table, rear of the sofa left. She picks up the receiver.

MINNIE (speaking into the phone) Hello—No, Mr. Kurt, she's not yet back. Vot? You're not coming home to dinner?—But I've made the pfannkuchen you like—Vot?—You're tired of my damn pfannkuchen—(She shouts angrily) Every night I make dinner and you and Marion go out!—I'm not yelling—Vot? Vot

shall I tell Marion?—Vot?—(Doorbell rings) Wait—wait a minute—Someone's ringing. (She puts the receiver on the table and goes to the door. MINNIE shows in LEANDER NOLAN, who is followed by ORRIN KINNICOTT, who is a big, well-developed Southerner, about fifty-five, with a high-pitched voice. He is a superbly

built man with a magnificent chest development He is aware that he is a fine figure of a man, impeccably dressed in formal afternoon clothes)

NOLAN (*to MINNIE, who has preceded him into the room*) Did Miss Froude say she was expecting us for tea, Minnie?

MINNIE No, Mr Nolan She didn't say nothing to me

NOLAN Not even when she'd be back?

MINNIE (*hangs up coats*) No She just went out

NOLAN All right, Minnie We'll wait

MINNIE Yes, Mr Nolan (*She is about to go out into kitchen when she remembers that KURT is on the telephone She picks up the receiver and says*) Hello—Mr Kurt—you dere?—Good-bye! (*She then hangs up the receiver and exits left*)

KINNICOTT (*querulously Sits on sofa right*) Did you tell her four o'clock?

NOLAN Yes I told her (*NOLAN's manner with his father-in-law-to-be in this scene conveys the beginnings of a secret irritation, an inner rebellion*)

KINNICOTT Does she know I'm a busy man?

NOLAN (*gloomily*) She's not impressed much by busy men

KINNICOTT I know these fly-by-night characters I've dealt with 'em be fore Bad— (*He sniffs the air of the room*) bad air (*Rises—tries to*

open window, fails, sits on window seat) Bet she's underexercised

NOLAN On the contrary—she's radiantly healthy!

KINNICOTT Cosmetics, I bet! These fly-by-night characters

NOLAN (*very irritated*) Why do you keep calling her a fly-by-night character? She's nothing of the sort!

KINNICOTT (*crosses to NOLAN*) Look here, Leander

NOLAN Well?

KINNICOTT Have you been entirely frank with me, in this matter?

NOLAN Of course I have

KINNICOTT (*cryptic*) About the past—yes But I refer to the present

NOLAN I don't know what you mean

KINNICOTT I think you do know what I mean Sometimes the way you talk I suspect—I suspect, Leander—that you are still in love with this woman

NOLAN Nonsense! I simply tell you that she's not a fly-by-night character That doesn't mean I'm in love with her!

KINNICOTT My daughter feels the same thing

NOLAN Slade! You've discussed this with Slade!

KINNICOTT She's discussed it with me She's no fool, that girl She's noticed things lately

NOLAN What things?

KINNICOTT She says she talks to you and that you're off somewhere else—dreaming I tried to put her on another scent—but she was positive. She said "Come on now, dad—don't stall me—come clean!" So I told her!

NOLAN You did!

KINNICOTT Yes

NOLAN When?

KINNICOTT Yesterday. Told her it happened fifteen years ago, that you were a naive young feller, didn't know anything about women, were just naturally taken in.

NOLAN That's not true though. I was not taken in.

KINNICOTT There you go again—defending the woman that's endangering your entire career and using up my energies and yours when you ought to be home right now getting together with folks and thinking how to cinch this here election. Not going to be a walk-over, you know (*Again trying the window*). How do you open this thing to get some air? (*Sits on window seat*)

NOLAN I don't know. What did Slade say when you told her?

KINNICOTT Nothin'. You know Slade's not the talkin' kind.

NOLAN Funny she didn't mention it to me last night.

KINNICOTT Didn't want to worry yer probably all wool and a yard wide that girl is. I warn you,

Leander, don't tamper with the most precious and rare thing.

NOLAN (*impatient of oratory*) I know—I know. The point is—what are we going to do?

KINNICOTT 'Course I can get that young fellow—what's his name?

NOLAN Kurt.

KINNICOTT I can get him fired all right. From what you've told me, Leander, he's got something else up his sleeve.

NOLAN I'm afraid so.

KINNICOTT That's what I want to find out from your lady friend. And I've got a pretty sure idea right now what it is.

NOLAN What do you mean?

KINNICOTT Money!

NOLAN (*still not understanding*) Money ?

KINNICOTT Blackmail!

NOLAN You're crazy!

KINNICOTT You don't know much about women, Leander, when you know the sex as well as I do. You'll know that every woman has blackmail up her sleeve.

NOLAN Look here, Ottn. I

KINNICOTT (*rises, confronts NOLAN*) Now, you listen to me for a moment, son. This situation's gone about far enough right now. You'd better make up your mind whether you want this blackmailing female

or whether you want my daughter
and you'd better make it up
right quick

NOLAN (*flaring up*) I resent your
tone, Orrin, and I won't be ordered
around as if I were a high-grade
servant!

KINNICOTT Now son, when you get
control of your temper, and cool
down a little bit, you'll see that my
ordering hasn't been so bad for you
I'll acknowledge you were mighty
successful as a lawyer, but in poli-
tics, you're nothing but a novice

NOLAN (*resentful*) Am I?
(*Doorbell*)

KINNICOTT Just look back a bit,
that's all—I've had to push and bol-
ster you to get you where you are

NOLAN (*desperately*) I know—I
have every reason to be grateful to
you—that's the worst of it
(MINNIE *enters and crosses to hall
door Both men turn and watch to
see who it is that is calling*)

MINNIE (*speaking to someone at the
door*) Ja, Fraulein?

SLADE (*off stage*) Is Miss Froude
in?

MINNIE Nein, Fraulein

SLADE (*entering*) Well, I'll just
wait (SLADE KINNICOTT is a good
looking, dark, high-spirited girl, a
rather inspiring and healthy exam-
ple of the generation growing up on
D H Lawrence To her father and
NOLAN as she crosses downstage be-
tween them) Hello.

NOLAN Slade!

KINNICOTT (*severely*) Daughter!
What are you doing here?

SLADE Came to have my picture
painted What are you?

KINNICOTT Your coming here at this
time is most inopportune, daughter.
We are here on business

SLADE (*mischievously*) I can im-
agine!

NOLAN I'm very glad you came,
Slade I want you to meet the woman
whom your father has just been ac-
cusing of the most reprehensible
crimes!

SLADE I'm pretty anxious to get a
load of her myself (*Looks about the
room taking it in and then sits on
the left end of the sofa below the
piano*) Nice lay-out Gee, I wish I
were artistic What a lucky gal she
is! A paint-brush and an easel and
she can set up shop anywhere in the
world That's independence for you!
Gosh! (*She looks about, admiring
and envious*)

KINNICOTT Why must you come
here to get your picture painted? We
have tolerable good artists in Knox-
ville

SLADE Well, if you must know I'm
very keen to have a heart-to-heart
talk with my fiancé's old girl Natu-
ral, isn't it?

KINNICOTT No, it isn't natural

NOLAN (*crosses angrily to window
and back toward KINNICOTT and sits
down on stool right near sofa on
which SLADE and her father are sit-
ting*) This is what you get for telling
her, Orrin

SLADE If you think I didn't suspect something was up ever since Froude arrived here, you don't know your little brde Maybe I haven't been watching the clouds gather on that classic brow! Where is my rival? Don't tell me she's holding up two big shoits like you two boys

KINNICOTT Slade, this is no time please leave us before she comes

SLADE Not I! Just my luck, when a story is going to come out which has something in it I want to read, you two killjoys are going to suppress it!

NOLAN This isn't exactly a joke, you know, Slade

SLADE I mean it

KINNICOTT (*sadly*) I've spoiled you, Slade—I've been too easy with you

SLADE At least I hope you'll buy the *manuscript* My God, father, I'm curious. Can't you understand that? I want to find out what Leander was like before he became ambitious I've a right to know! This story might hurt you with the voters in Tennessee, Leander, but it's given me a kick out of you I didn't know was there! How did she make you, Leander—that's what I'd like to know You've been pretty unapproachable to me but I sort of took it for granted National Figures were like that Also I'd gotten to the point when I was going to suggest that we break our engagement, but this little incident revives my interest

NOLAN (*furious*) Indeed!

SLADE Yes indeed Where is this woman? What is that secret? How

to Make National Figures . . . there's a title for you!

KINNICOTT Slade, you're talking too much! Shut up!

NOLAN (*rises and moves stool toward them a bit*) No, she isn't at all . . . (To SLADE) If your interest in me requires the artificial stimulus of an episode that happened twenty years ago

SLADE (*leaning toward him*) It requires something

NOLAN (*leaning closer toward her The three heads are now close together, KINNICOTT's in the center*) Does it?

SLADE It does We were getting so that conversation, when we were alone, was rather difficult (NOLAN starts to argue)

KINNICOTT (*pushes them apart*). Children! Children!

NOLAN We're not children! (To SLADE) If our relationship is so—

SLADE Tenuous ?

NOLAN That it requires artificial

SLADE Respiration ?

NOLAN If it's as bad as that then I think perhaps we'd both better .

SLADE Call it a day? You'll need me in the Senate, Leander, to fill in the gaps when you get hung up in a speech Consider carefully what you are discarding .

NOLAN If that is the case I tell you solemnly we'd better separate now

like a prepared speech on tariff schedules?

SLADE (*mock tragedy*) Father, Leander is giving your daughter the air. Do something!

KINNICOTT This is getting us nowhere

KINNICOTT I don't blame him for being irritated. You should not be here. Please go home.

SLADE Well, dad, what do you expect? Leander and I have broken our engagement since I came into this room. That's progress, isn't it?

SLADE (*lights cigarette*) Don't worry, dad. I'll get him back.

KINNICOTT Your coming here at this time was most unfortunate.

KINNICOTT This is a bad mess, Leander. And I must tell you frankly that I don't altogether approve of your attitude.

SLADE Leander doesn't think so (*Ironically*). He's free now to pursue the lady for whom he still has a high regard (*Rises*). Are we no longer engaged, Leander?

NOLAN And I must tell you frankly that I don't approve of yours.

NOLAN That's not for me to say.

KINNICOTT Is that so?

SLADE (*rises and shakes hands with NOLAN*) Gentleman to the last! And at the very moment—

NOLAN I don't like your tone in speaking of a woman with whom at one time I had a relation of the tenderest emotion—for whom I still have a high regard.

KINNICOTT (*in despair—speaks as SLADE starts to speak*) Slade, if you would only go home!

KINNICOTT That's evident anyway!

SLADE (*crosses left*) Just at the very moment when I was saying to myself: Well, if a brilliant and beautiful woman who has played footie with royalty in the capitals of the world loved him, maybe there's a secret charm in him that I've overlooked—just when I was saying that and preparing to probe and discover, (*Lightly*) he gives me the air (*Sits on sofa left*). By God, Orrin, there's life for you (*Bell rings*). Ah, that must be my rival! (*NOLAN gets up and fixes his tie, expecting MARION. But it is KURT who comes in. He faces them. He is in a white heat of anger.*)

NOLAN When you apply to such a woman the terms you used before Slade came in, when you impute to her motives so base, you cast an equal reflection on my judgment and my character.

SLADE And that, pop, is *lèse-majesté*!

NOLAN And it may be perfectly true, Slade, that knowing Miss Froude has spoiled me for the flippant modernisms with which you study.

KURT Well, gentleman, I'm not surprised to find you here! (*Drops hat*)

SLADE I'm dying to ask her one thing: when you made love to her in the old days did it always sound

on model stand and comes down-stage left)

NOLAN (*about to introduce KINNICOTT*) How do you do, Mr Kurt . . . this is .

KURT I can guess who it is I can guess why you're here Having failed to intimidate *me* you are here to intimidate Miss Froude (*SLADE rises, excited by this tempest*) Well, I can advise you that you will fail with her too.

NOLAN This is his usual style, Orrin Don't mind him

KURT I have just come from my office where I have been informed by Mr Neff— (*SLADE stands below KURT—just behind him—watching him*) whom you doubtless know, Mr Kinnicott—that I could decide between publishing Miss Froude's story or giving up my job I invited him to go to hell That invitation I now cordially extend to you two gentlemen

SLADE Why doesn't somebody introduce me to this interesting young man? (*She comes toward him KURT is embarrassed, but covers it in a gruff manner. He has actually not been aware of her in the room*)

KURT I'm sorry—I—I didn't know

SLADE Why are you sorry? I'm Slade Kinnicott (*She gives him her hand He takes it, limply*)

KURT Alright—alright (*He is disarmed and feels, suddenly, rather foolish*)

SLADE Leander, why have you kept me apart from this young man?

KURT I'm sorry—I . . .

SLADE Nonsense What's your name?

KURT Richard Kurt

SLADE Go to it— (*Turns him toward others*)

KINNICOTT (*impressively—interposing between them*) You're being very foolish, young man

KURT (*crosses toward them—to right of model stand*) Possibly

NOLAN You can't argue with him I've tried it He's a fanatic

KURT But if you ask me I *think* you're being very foolish

KINNICOTT (*who wants to find out what's in KURT's mind*) Are we? How do you figure that, young man?

SLADE (*parroting—crosses and sits on model stand She is having a wonderful time*) Yes, how!

KINNICOTT Oh, hush your mouth

KURT Because I'm going to publish Miss Froude's book myself And I promise you that it'll be the best-advertised first book that's come out in a long time

SLADE Thank God! Will you send me the advance sheets? I'll make it worth your while, Mr Kurt

KINNICOTT I can see you are an extremely impulsive young man Have you ever inquired, may I ask ?

SLADE (*edges a bit closer to KURT*) This is going to be dangerous! Look

out, Richard . (NOLAN sits on stool, disgusted with SLADE)

KINNICOTT (*smoothly*) Have you inquired into the penalties for libel, Mr Kurt?

KURT Libel! You're going to sue me for libel, are you?

KINNICOTT (*same voice*) Yes You and Miss Froude both yes

KURT Well, you just go ahead and try it, that's all I can tell you Go ahead and sue (*Crosses to above NOLAN*) It'll put Mr Nolan in a charming position before those moral constituents of his, won't it? (*Includes both NOLAN and KINNICOTT*) Go ahead and sue, both of you—sue year heads off I I promise the two of you I'll give you the fight of your lives!

SLADE (*delighted*) Good for you, Richard!

(MARION comes in She wears a long red velvet coat, and a little red cap stuck on the side of her golden head—she looks a little like Portia She is at the top of her form)

MARION (*beaming with hospitality*) Well! How nice! Minnie!

KURT (*goes upstage to right of MARION*) This chivalrous gentleman has just been proposing to sue you for libel—he considers

SLADE (*who rises and stands just below the model stand*) I'm Slade Kinnicott

MARION (*crosses downstage to her and they shake hands over the model stand*) How very nice of you to come! (*Turns and faces KINNICOTT*)

Is this Mr Kinnicott? (*He bows*) I'm so glad to see you (*They shake hands*) I'm so sorry to be late (*Waves hello to NOLAN*) Hello, Bunny

SLADE (*this is too much for her*) Oh, my God—BUNNY! (*She sits, overcome*)

MARION (*to NOLAN*) I'm so sorry .

NOLAN (*glaring at SLADE*) It's all right, Marion!

MARION Has Minnie given you tea? I'll just Minnie! (*MINNIE enters*) Tea, Minnie, please (*To the men*) Or cocktails—highballs ?

KINNICOTT I never drink alcoholic mixtures

NOLAN (*asserting his independence*) I'll have a highball!

KINNICOTT I must tell you, Leander, that I do not approve—

NOLAN I'll have two whiskies straight!

MARION Good! Highball for you, Miss Kinnicott?

SLADE Thanks

MARION I'll fix them myself, Minnie. Just bring us some tea, Minnie

KINNICOTT Nor do I wish any tea,

KURT (*crosses down left*) Nor do I

MARION Do you mind if I have a cup? Do sit down, Miss Kinnicott A tiring day (*SLADE sits on model stand* MARION goes up to rear

of piano) Minnie, please bring me a cup of tea—

MINNIE Ja, Fraulein (*Remembering*) A telegram for you, Fraulein

MARION Oh, thank you, Minnie Just put it there on the table (MINNIE leaves the telegram on the table rear of the sofa left and then exits left MARION removes her coat and hat and crosses to rear of piano and starts to mix the highballs) Now then! What is all this nice cheerful talk about a libel suit? That's what they're always having in England, isn't it, on the least provocation It's when you've circulated a lie about someone—defamed someone—maliciously—isn't it? Bunny! (*She gives NOLAN his two drinks He takes them and returns to his position MARION picks up the other glass and crosses with it to SLADE*) Now then—whom have I defamed?

KURT You've defamed the Honorable Mr. Nolan!

MARION (*hands drink to SLADE*) Have I? Oh, I am tired (*She sits on sofa*) Sit by me, won't you, Miss Kinnicott?

SLADE (*sauntering over*) Thanks (*She sits by MARION on the sofa*)

MARION You're very pretty

SLADE (*more warmly*) Thanks!

MARION Bunny, I congratulate you I've heard so much about you, Miss Kinnicott And I think it's very gracious of you to come and see me If Bunny lets me I'd like to paint you—(MINNIE enters) and give you the portrait for a wedding-present (*She rises and crosses to above model stand*

to get cup of tea from MINNIE. MINNIE exits left) Thank you, Minnie

SLADE You're very lovely

MARION Thank you, my dear

SLADE I can't tell you how curious I've been about you—I—

KINNICOTT This is all very well—but I'm a busy man

MARION (*looks at KINNICOTT as she crosses and sits right of SLADE A moment, then MARION speaks*) It seems so strange to see you with all your clothes on It seems a pity—as an artist I must say it seems a pity—to conceal that wonderful chest development that I've admired so often in The Body Beautiful

KINNICOTT That's neither here nor there

MARION (*this is almost an aside to SLADE*) It seems to me that it's decidedly there (*MARION and SLADE laugh quietly together*)

KINNICOTT Slade, you've upset everything by coming here (*KURT comes forward He has been eaten up with irritation that the superb indignation he felt should have been so dissipated by this cascade of small talk He can stand it no longer*)

KURT (*crosses to right of model stand*) If you understood better what these gentlemen mean to do

NOLAN (*protests*) It wasn't my idea!

KURT You wouldn't be quite so friendly, Marion

MARION I couldn't possibly be unfriendly to anyone so frank—and—and gladiatorial—as Mr. Kinnicott

KURT (*furious at her for not letting him launch into it*) A libel suit

MARION Oh, yes! A libel suit! It sounds so cozy Sit down, won't you? (KINNICOTT *sits on stool*) A libel suit Now then—what shall it be about?

KURT The Honorable Nolan is going to sue you for libel

NOLAN I'll punch your head if you say that again

KURT On the assumption that when you say in your story that you and he were lovers you are lying and defaming his character!

MARION Dear Bunny, you must want to be a Senator very very badly!

NOLAN (*in despair*) I never said it, I tell you!

MARION As a matter of fact, how could I prove it? Come to think of it, are there any letters? Did you ever write to me, Bunny?

NOLAN I don't remember

MARION I don't think you ever did You see—we were always—during that dim brief period of your youth—we were always so close—letters were hardly necessary, were they? Did I ever send you any letters, Bunny?

NOLAN I don't remember, I tell you

MARION Neither do I You might look around in old trunks and places

and see if you can find some old letters of an affectionate nature—I'd love to read them—they'd probably make wonderful reading now Why is it that the things one writes when one's young always sounds so foolish afterwards? Has that ever occurred to you, Mr Kinnicott?

KINNICOTT I don't admit the fact

MARION No

KINNICOTT No I was looking over some old editorials of mine written in the depression of 1907 and they're just as apropos today I haven't changed my ideas in twenty-five years

MARION Haven't you really? How very steadfast Now if the world were equally changeless, how consistent that would make you (To KURT) Well, there isn't any documentary evidence

KURT It doesn't matter

KINNICOTT As I said before, this is getting us nowhere Don't you think, Miss Froude, that the only way we can settle this is by ourselves? (*She smiles at him*) I can see you're a sensible woman

MARION I am very sensible

KINNICOTT And you and I can settle this matter in short order

KURT You don't have to talk to him at all if you don't want to

MARION (*smiling at KINNICOTT*) But I'd love to I've always wanted to meet Mr Kinnicott There are some questions I want very much to ask him (*To the others*) You can

all wait in my bedroom It's fairly tidy, I think

SLADE (to KURT— Rises, crosses to him) Why don't you take me for a walk, Richard?

MARION (as KURT hesitates) Do that, Dickie A walk'll do you good

NOLAN What'll I do?

MARION (as if it were another dilemma) You wait in my bedroom (Aware suddenly of the proprieties) No—in Minnie's bedroom It's just next to the kitchen

NOLAN (defiantly) I will! (He exits into bedroom)

KURT (sulky—he doesn't quite like the turn affairs have taken) We'll be back in ten minutes

SLADE (as they go out) You can't tell, Richard (SLADE and KURT exit)

(MARION draws a deep breath She assumes at once with KINNICOTT the air of two equals, mature people talking freely to each other after they've gotten rid of the children)

MARION (they cross to sofa left) Now we can talk! It's funny—I feel we've put the children to bed and can have a quiet talk after a lot of chatter

KINNICOTT Same here!

MARION Please sit down (They do)

KINNICOTT I feel sure you and I can come to an understanding

MARION I'm sure we can

KINNICOTT. Now then, about this little matter of the story— You won't mind if I speak very frankly to you ?

MARION Not at all

KINNICOTT You see, Miss Froude

MARION Oh, call me Marion Every body does

KINNICOTT Thanks Call me Orrin.

MARION Alright, I'll try Not a very usual name Orrin Fits you Strong. Rugged strength

KINNICOTT Thank you

MARION You're welcome What were you going to say when I interrupted you? You were going to say something

KINNICOTT I was going to say—you're not at all what I expected to meet

MARION No? What did you think I'd be like? Tell me—I'd love to know

KINNICOTT Well, you're kind of homely—you know—folksy

MARION Folksy (Smiles) After all, there's no reason I shouldn't be, is there? I'm just a small-town girl from Tennessee I sometimes wonder at myself—how I ever got so far away

KINNICOTT (positively) Metabolism!

MARION I beg your pardon

KINNICOTT I always say—take most of the bad men and most of the loose

women and correct their metabolism and you'll correct them

MARION Really?

KINNICOTT (*seriously*) Absolutely Trouble with our penology experts—so called—is that they're psychologists—so-called—when they should be physiologists

MARION That is very interesting indeed Have you ever written anything about that?

KINNICOTT Off and on

MARION Any definitive work I mean?

KINNICOTT I'm considering doing that right now

MARION Oh, I do wish you would! It's extraordinary how little one knows about one's own body, isn't it? I get so impatient of myself sometimes—of my physical limitations My mind is seething with ideas but I haven't the physical energy to go on working I tire so quickly—and often for no apparent reason Why is that, Mr Kinnicott?

KINNICOTT Defective—
(*She says at same time with him*)

MARION—KINNICOTT Metabolism!

KINNICOTT Tell me—

MARION What?

KINNICOTT Do you eat enough roughage?

MARION I don't know, offhand.

KINNICOTT (*firmly*) Well, you should know!

MARION As I say, Omin—one is so ignorant of these fundamental things

KINNICOTT (*definitely aware now of MARION as a personal possibility*). I can see this, Marion—if you'd met me—instead of Leander—when you were a young girl—you'd have been a different woman

MARION I'm sure I would Imagine—with one's metabolism disciplined early in life—how far one could go

KINNICOTT (*confidentially offering her hope*) It's not too late!

MARION Isn't it?

KINNICOTT Er (*He drops his voice still lower*) What are you doing tomorrow evenin'?

MARION I—I'm free

KINNICOTT (*same voice*) Will you have dinner with me?

MARION I'd be delighted

KINNICOTT Fine! Then we can go over this little matter of the story and Leander quietly Leander isn't strong on tact

MARION You know, some men aren't.

KINNICOTT You and I can make a friendly adjustment

MARION What fun! (*They chuckle*)

KINNICOTT What time shall we meet? Say seven-thirty?

MARION Let's say eight . . . do you mind?

KINNICOTT My apartment?

MARION If you like

KINNICOTT Here's my card with the address It's a roof apartment I'm a widower

MARION Irresistible combination!

KINNICOTT By the way—

MARION What?

KINNICOTT Don't mention our little date for tomorrow evenin' to Leander

MARION (rising) No, I agree with you I don't think that would be wise

KINNICOTT (nodding trustingly — rises) Fine! At seven-thirty?

MARION No—no Eight

KINNICOTT Oh yes eight (A moment's pause He visibly preens before her, buttoning his beautifully-fitting frock coat across his heroic chest)

MARION (approving) Wonderful! Wonderful!

KINNICOTT (going toward bedroom To her) Do you mind if I Leander

MARION Not at all

KINNICOTT I'll take the load off his mind
(He goes out She can't believe it The whole situation is so fantastic She flings off her little red cap and shaking with laughter collapses on the couch MINNIE comes in to clear up the tea-things)

MARION (as MINNIE enters) It's too good to be true, Minnie

MINNIE Vat is too good to be true?

MARION I must write some of it down before I forget it (The bell again MARION gets up to make notes on her script) —A widower's penthouse— (With an irritated sigh MINNIE goes out to answer bell MARION sits at desk jotting notes very fast SLADE and KURT come in KURT is morose MARION gets up to greet them) Well, children?

SLADE That walk was a total loss

MARION (laughing) What did you expect?

SLADE Well, a little encouragement —just a soupçon

MARION Dickie's very senous

SLADE How did you come out with dad?

MARION Wonderful! I'm crazy about him!

SLADE But he got you to renege on the story

MARION Well, he thinks so However, we're going to discuss it tomorrow evenin'

SLADE Thought he'd date you up— could tell by the way he eyed you

MARION He's going to teach me how to live in a state of virtuous metabolism

SLADE Oh! Don't you believe it! Dad's an awful old chaser

MARION (*rather shocked*) Slade!

SLADE (*amused*) Are you shocked?

MARION You make me feel a little old-fashioned (*KURT is intensely irritated by this conversation*)

KURT Where are they?

MARION They're in there sitting on Minnie's bed Ottin is probably telling Bunny that everything'll be all right

SLADE (*sits left of MARION*) Marion

MARION Yes

SLADE What is there about Bunny you can't help liking?
(*Utterly disgusted, KURT goes to sofa down left and sits staring moodily into a gloomily-tinted future*)

MARION He's a dear—there's something very touching about Bunny—sweet

SLADE Were you in love with him once?

MARION Yes

SLADE Are you in love with him now?

MARION No

SLADE (*in a whisper*) Are you in love with—someone else?

MARION (*a moment's pause*) Yes

SLADE I thought you were He's mad about you — I envy you, Marion

MARION Do you? Why?

SLADE You're independent You're —yourself You can do anything you like

MARION Yes, I know But it's possible one can pay too much for independence I'm adrift Sometimes—you know what seems to me the most heavenly thing—the only thing—for a woman? Marriage, children—the dear boundaries of routine

SLADE If you had married Bunny he would've given 'em to you He's still in love with you, but he doesn't quite know it Shall I tell him?

MARION (*parrying*) What are you talking about?

SLADE I wish we could change places, Marion You can with me but I can't with you
(*KINNICOTT and NOLAN come in from the bedroom KINNICOTT is at his most oleaginous*)

KINNICOTT (*to KURT*) Well, young man! Over your little temper?

KURT No, I'm not over it! What makes you think I'm over it?

KINNICOTT Well, well, well! As far as I'm concerned there are no hard feelings I'm going to call up your employer myself when I get home and tell him, that as far as you are concerned, to let bygones be bygones Can't do more than that, can I?

KURT To what do I owe this generosity?

KINNICOTT To the fact that in Miss Froude you have a most gracious friend and interceptor (*He gives MARION a gallant, old-South bow*) Miss Froude—this has been a very great pleasure

MARION (*rises—with an answering bow*) Thank you! (SLADE also rises)

KINNICOTT (*giving her his hand*)
Auf wiedersehen

MARION Auf wiedersehen Ich kann es kaum erwarten!

KINNICOTT (*pretending to understand*) Yes, oh, yes, yes, of course! (To SLADE) Come, Slade. (*He goes to hall door*)

SLADE All right, dad (To NOLAN)
Coming—Bunny?

NOLAN Well, yes—I'm coming

SLADE (to NOLAN) You want to stay Why don't you?

KINNICOTT (*quickly marshaling his little following with a military precision*) I think Leander had better come with us—

SLADE (to MARION) Good-bye, Marion

MARION (to SLADE) Good-bye, Slade (*They shake hands*) Come to see me

SLADE Thanks, I will

KINNICOTT (*smiles at MARION*) Miss Froude! (*Bows to MARION who returns his bow*) Come, daughter Come, Leander (To KURT) Good-bye, young man No hard feelings (*KURT glares at him*) KINNICOTT again bows to MARION) Miss Froude! (*MARION is startled into still a third bow* He calls without looking back) Come, Slade! Leander!

SLADE (*as she exits*) Bunny!

NOLAN (*lingers an instant then crosses to MARION*) I'll be back.

MARION When?

NOLAN In a few minutes All right?

MARION I'll be in (*He goes out quickly*) MARION is in wonderful spirits She runs to KURT and throws her arms around him) Oh, Dickie That Orin! That Orin!

KURT What did you say to him that put him in such good spirits?

MARION Everything I said put him in good spirits I can't wait for tomorrow evenin' I can't wait for that dinner It'll probably consist entirely of roughage—just imagine! He's the quaintest man I ever met in my life. He's too good to be true (*Sits right of KURT*)

KURT Well, he may be quaint to you but to me he's a putrescent old hypocrite and I don't see how you can bear to have him come near you, say less go to dinner with him!

MARION (*sobered by his intensity*) You're so merciless in your judgments, Dickie You quite frighten me sometimes—you do really

KURT And so do you me

MARION I do? That's absurd!

KURT You do It's like thinking a person fastidious and exacting and finding her suddenly

MARION. Gross—indiscriminating?

KURT (*bluntly*). Yes!

MARION. You know, Dickie, I adore you and I'm touched by you and I love you but I'd hate to live in a country where you were Dictator. It would be all right while you loved me but when you stopped .

KURT. It wouldn't make any difference if I stopped—I shouldn't be that kind of a Dictator.

MARION (*glances at him Almost sadly*). I see you've thought of it.

KURT (*inexorably*). What did you say to Kinnicott?

MARION. Your manner is so—inquisitorial. I haven't been able to get used to it.

KURT (*angry and jealous*). I heard you tell Nolan to come back too. How do you think I feel?

MARION. Dickie!

KURT. When Nolan sat there and told me he had been your lover, I felt like socking him. Even when we're alone together, I can't forget that . . . yet you encourage him, and Kinnicott—My God, Marion, you seem to like these people!

MARION. I certainly like Slade.

KURT. Well I don't. She's conceited and overbearing. Thinks she can have anything she likes because she's Orin Kinnicott's daughter.

MARION. That's where you're wrong. She's a nice girl—and she's unhappy.

KURT (*bitterly*). Maladjusted, I suppose!

MARION. Dickie, Dickie, Dickie! Studying you, I can see why so many movements against injustice become such absolute—tyrannies.

KURT. That beautiful detachment again. (*He is white with fury. He hates her at this moment*.)

MARION (*with a little laugh*). You hate me, don't you . . . ?

KURT. Yes! Temporizing with these . . . Yes . . . I hate you. (*She says nothing, sits there looking at him*.) These people flout you, they insult you in the most flagrant way. God knows I'm not a gentleman, but it horrifies me to think of the insufferable arrogance of their attitude toward you . . . as if the final insult to their pride and their honor could only come from the discovery that this stuffed shirt Nolan had once been your lover! The blot on the immaculate Tennessee scutcheon! Why, it's the God-damndest insolence I ever heard of. And yet you flirt and curry favor and bandy with them. And you're amused—always amused!

MARION. Yes. I am amused.

KURT. I can't understand such . . . !

MARION. Of course you can't. That's the difference—one of the differences—between 25 and 35!

KURT. If the time ever comes when I'm amused by what I should hate, I hope somebody shoots me. What did you tell Kinnicott?

MARION. Nothing. Simply nothing. I saw no point in having a scene with him so I inquired into his favorite subject. He gave me health hints. He thinks tomorrow night he will

cajole me—through the exercise of his great personal charm—into giving up my plan to publish

KURT Well, why didn't you tell him right out that you wouldn't?

MARION. Because I wanted to avoid a scene

KURT You can't always avoid scenes That's the trouble with you—you expect to go through life as if it were a beautifully-lit drawing room with modulated voices making polite chatter Life isn't a drawing room . !

MARION I have—once or twice—suspected it

KURT (rises) What the devil are you afraid of, anyway? I had a scene today in the office and I was prepared for one here—until you let me down—

MARION (lightly) Prepared? I think you were eager

KURT What if I was! It's in your behalf, isn't it?

MARION Is it? But you forget, Dickie You're a born martyr I'm not I think the most uncomfortable thing about martyrs is that they look down on people who aren't (Thinks—looks at him) As a matter of fact, Dickie, I don't really understand Why do you insist so on this story? Why is it so important—now wouldn't it be better to give it up?

KURT Give it up!

MARION Yes

KURT You'd give it up!

MARION Why not?

KURT (obeying a sudden manic impulse) After all this—after all I've—! Oh, yes, of course! Then you could marry Nolan and live happily forever after And be amused Good-bye! (He rushes up center, grabs his hat from the stand as he passes it, and continues on out the door)

MARION (rises and runs after him) Dickie!

KURT (going out the door) Good-bye!

MARION Dickie! Dickie! (The door slams MARION walks back into the room A pause She stands still for a moment, she shakes her head

She is very distressed and saddened and a deep unhappiness is gnawing in her heart, an awareness of the vast, uncrossable deserts between the souls of human beings She makes a little helpless gesture with her hands, murmuring to herself) Poor Dickie! Poor boy! (In its Italian folder the manuscript of her book is lying on the piano before her She picks it up—she gives the effect of weighing the script in her hand Slowly, as if in a trance, she walks with the script to the Franklin stove downstage left and sits before it on a little stool She opens the manuscript and then the inglass door of the stove The light from behind it glows on her face She looks again down on her manuscript, at this morsel of her recorded past She tears out a page or two and puts them into the fire A moment and she has put the entire script into the stove and she sits there watching its cremation The doorbell rings As MINNIE comes in to answer it, she shuts the door of the stove quickly`

MARION. It's probably Mr Nolan
(MINNIE goes out MARION makes a visible effort to shake herself out of her mood NOLAN comes in followed by MINNIE who crosses stage and goes in the bedroom left NOLAN is excited and distraught)

NOLAN Hello, Marion

MARION Hello, Bunny dear

NOLAN (sparring for time) Excuse me for rushing in on you like this
I

MARION I've been expecting you

NOLAN That's right! I told you I was coming back, didn't I?

MARION You did—yes

NOLAN I must have known—I must have felt it—what would happen
Marion

MARION Bunny dear, you're all worked up Won't you have a high-ball?

NOLAN No, thanks Marion

MARION Yes, Bunny

NOLAN I've done it!

MARION You've done what?

NOLAN I've broken with Slade I've broken with Kinnicott I've broken with all of them

MARION You haven't!

NOLAN Yes! I have!

MARION Oh—oh, Bunny!

NOLAN (sits) When Omm told me what you'd done—that you were going to give up the story

MARION But I—

NOLAN He said he was sure he could get you to do it It all came over me—your generosity—your wonderful generosity

MARION (beyond words) Oh, Bunny! (Sits She is in a sort of laughing despair He hardly notices her attitude He rushes on)

NOLAN I realized in that moment that in all this time—since I'd been seeing you—I'd been hoping you wouldn't give up the story, that you would go through with it, that my career would go to smash

MARION (faintly) Bunny

NOLAN I saw then that all this—which I'd been telling myself I wanted—Slade, a career, Washington, public life—all of it—that I didn't want it, that I was sick at the prospect of it—that I wasn't up to it, that I was scared to death of it I saw all that—and I told her—I told Slade

MARION You did!

NOLAN Yes

MARION What did she say?

NOLAN She said she knew it She's clever, that girl She's cleverer than I am She's cleverer than you are I'm afraid of her cleverness I'm uncomfortable with it Marion, I know I seem stupid and ridiculous to you—just a Babbitt—clumsy—but I love you, Marion I always have—never anyone else Let me go with you

wherever you go— (*Lest she think it a "proposition"*) I mean—I want to marry you

MARION I'm terribly touched by this, Bunny darling, but I can't marry you

NOLAN Why not?

MARION If I married you it would be for the wrong reasons. And it wouldn't be in character really—neither for me—nor for you Besides that, I think you're wrong about Slade She's very nice, you know I like her very much

NOLAN I don't understand her I never will

MARION If you did you'd like her You better have another try Really, Bunny, I wish you would

NOLAN Letting me down easy, aren't you?

MARION It's Slade's manner that shocks you—her modern—gestures If you really understood me—as you think you do—I'd really shock you very much, Bunny

NOLAN I'll risk it Marion, my dearest Marion, won't you give me some hope?

MARION (*sees she must tell him*) Besides,—I'm in love

NOLAN (*stunned*) Really! With whom?

MARION Dickie You see, Bunny . . . (*He can't get over this There is a considerable pause*) You see, Bunny . . .

NOLAN (*slowly*) Do you mean that you and he—you don't mean that ?

MARION Yes, Bunny

NOLAN (*dazed*) Are you going to marry him?

MARION No

NOLAN (*he passes his hand over his forehead*) This is a shock to me, Marion

MARION (*gently*) I thought it only fair to tell you

NOLAN (*in a sudden passion*) You—you (*He feels like striking her, controls himself with difficulty*) Anybody else but him . . . !

MARION You see, Bunny

NOLAN (*after a moment—rises*) Sorry! Funny, isn't it? Joke, isn't it?

MARION I'm terribly fond of you, Bunny (*Takes his hand*) I always will be That kind of tenderness outlasts many things

NOLAN (*blindly*) I'll go on, I suppose

MARION Of course you will! (*NOLAN crosses to model stand and gets his hat KURT comes in There is a silence NOLAN forces himself to look at him KURT does not meet his glance KURT is white and shaken—not in the least truculent*) Good-bye, Bunny dear, Bunny!

NOLAN Yes, Marion

MARION Will you do me a favor?

NOLAN Yes,

MARION Will you please tell Mr. Kinnicott for me—that as I've been called out of town suddenly—I can't dine with him tomorrow night. You will see him, won't you, and you'll tell him?

NOLAN Yes (NOLAN leaves. A silence again. Suddenly KURT goes to her, embraces her with a kind of hopeless intensity.)

KURT (in a whisper, like a child) Please forgive me.

MARION Yes

KURT These moods come over me—I can't control myself—afterwards I hate myself—it's because I love you so much—I can't bear to

MARION I know, dear—I know

KURT I'm torn up all the time—torn to bits

MARION I know, dear

KURT When this is all blown over—could we—do you think

MARION What, dear?

KURT If we could only go away together, the two of us—somewhere away from people, by ourselves?

MARION Why not, Dickie? We can go now, if you want to

KURT Now? But you're crazy. How can we possibly leave now—with the book

MARION Dickie—I must tell you

KURT You must tell me what?

MARION You must be patient—you must hear me out for once—you must try to understand my point of view. (She leads him to sofa left and sits beside him.)

KURT What do you mean?

MARION You know, Dickie, I've been very troubled about you. I've been sad. I've been sad.

KURT I was angry. I didn't mean. It was just that.

MARION No, you don't understand—it wasn't your anger that troubled me. It was ourselves—the difference between us—not the years alone but the immutable difference in temperament. Your hates frighten me, Dickie. These people—poor Bunny, that ridiculous fellow Kinnicott—to you these rather ineffectual, blundering people symbolize the forces that have hurt you and you hate them. But I don't hate them. I can't hate them. Without feeling it, I can understand your hate but I can't bring myself to foster it. To you, this book has become a crusade. It couldn't be to me. Do you know, Dickie dear—and this has made me laugh so to myself—that there was nothing in the book about Bunny that would ever have been recognized by anybody. It was an idyllic chapter of first love—that's all—and there was nothing in it that could remotely have been connected with the Bunny that is now.

KURT So much the better—I think of the spectacle they'll make of themselves—destroyed by laughter.

MARION I don't believe in destructive campaigns, Dickie. . . . outside

of the shocking vulgarity of it all—I couldn't do it—for the distress it would cause

KURT You've decided not to publish then

MARION I've destroyed the book, Dickie

KURT You've destroyed it!

MARION Yes I'm sorry

KURT You traitor!

MARION It seemed the simple thing to do—the inevitable thing

KURT What about *me*? You might have consulted *me*—after what I've

MARION I'm terribly sorry—but I couldn't possibly have published that book

KURT (*in a queer voice*) I see now why everything is this way

MARION I couldn't

KURT Why the injustice and the cruelty go on—year after year—century after century—without change—because—as they grow older—people become—*tolerant*! Things amuse them I hate you and I hate your tolerance I always did

MARION I know you do You hate my essential quality—the thing that is me. That's what I was thinking just now and that's what made me sad

KURT Nothing to be said, is there? (*Rises*) Good-bye

MARION (*rises*) All right! (*KURT starts to go She calls after him, pitifully*) Won't you kiss me good-bye?

KURT All right
(*MARION goes up after him They kiss each other passionately*)

MARION (*whispering to him*) I would try to change you I know I would And if I changed you I should destroy what makes me love you Good-bye, my darling Good-bye, my dearest Go quickly (*KURT goes up stage and exits without a word He is blinded by pain*) Dickie
(*MARION is left alone She is trembling a little She feels cold She goes to the stove and sits in front of it, her back to it, trying to get warm She becomes aware that her eyes are full of tears As MINNIE comes in, she brushes them away*)

MINNIE Are you worried from anything, Marion?

MARION No, Minnie I'm alright

MINNIE I tink maybe dot telegram bring you bad news

MARION Telegram? What telegram?

MINNIE Dot telegram I bring you

MARION Of course—I haven't even—where is it?

MINNIE (*gets telegram from table rear of sofa left and hands it to MARION*) There it is!

MARION Thank you, Minnie (*Opens telegram and reads it*) This is from heaven! Minnie, I want you to pack right away We're leaving! (*She springs up*)

MINNIE Leaving? Ven?

MARION Right away Tonight! This is from Feydie! Listen! (*Reads telegram aloud to MINNIE*) "Can get you commission to paint prize winners Motion Picture Academy—wire answer at once Feydie" (*Hysterically grateful for the mercy of having something to do at once, of being busy, of not having time to think*) Something always turns up for me! Pack everything, Minnie I want to get out right away (*She rushes up-stage right, picks up her hat and coat and then runs to the stairs left*)

MINNIE Don't you tink you better wait till tomorrow?

MARION No, Minnie Once the temptation to a journey comes into my head I can't bear it till I'm on my way! This time, Minnie, we'll have a real trip From Hollywood we'll go to Honolulu and from Honolulu to China How would you like that, Minnie? (*She starts up the stairs*)

MINNIE (*for her, enthusiastic*) Fine, Marion! (*Calls after her as she runs upstairs*) Dot crazy Kurt he goes wit us?

MARION (*as she disappears into her bedroom*) No, Minnie—no one—we travel alone!

(*Quick curtain*)

Ah, Wilderness!

BY EUGENE O'NEILL

TO

GEORGE JEAN NATHAN

who also, once upon a time, in peg-top trousers
went the pace that kills along the road to ruin

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Ah, Wilderness! was first produced at the Guild Theatre, New York City, by the Theatre Guild, on October 2, 1933, and closed on June 7, 1934. Following is the original cast

| | |
|---|---------------------|
| NAT MILLER, <i>owner of the Evening Globe</i> | George M Cohan |
| ESSIE, <i>his wife</i> | Marjorie Marquis |
| ARTHUR, <i>their son</i> | William Post, Jr |
| RICHARD, <i>their son</i> | Elisha Cook, Jr |
| MILDRED, <i>their daughter</i> | Adelaide Bean |
| TOMMY, <i>their son</i> | Walter Vonnegut, Jr |
| SID DAVIS, <i>Essie's brother, reporter on the Waterbury Standard</i> | Gene Lockhart |
| LILY MILLER, <i>Nat's sister</i> | Eda Heinemann |
| DAVID McCOMBER, <i>dry-goods merchant</i> | Richard Sterling |
| MURIEL McCOMBER, <i>his daughter</i> | Ruth Gilbert |
| WENT SELBY, <i>a classmate of Arthur's at Yale</i> | John Wynne |
| BELLE | Ruth Holden |
| NORA | Ruth Chorpennning |
| BARTENDER | Donald McClelland |
| SALESMAN | John Butler |

Directed by Philip Moeller

Settings designed by Robert Edmond Jones

SCENES

ACT ONE

Sitting-room of the Miller home in a large small-town in Connecticut—
early morning, July 4th, 1906

ACT TWO

Dining-room of the Miller home—evening of the same day

ACT THREE

SCENE I

Back room of a bar in a small hotel—10 o'clock the same night

SCENE II

Same as Act One—the sitting-room of the Miller home—a little after
11 o'clock the same night

ACT FOUR

SCENE I

The Miller sitting room again—about 1 o'clock the following afternoon

SCENE II

A strip of beach along the harbor—about 9 o'clock that night

SCENE THREE

Same as Scene One—the sitting-room—about 10 o'clock the same night

AH, WILDERNESS!

ACT ONE

SCENE—*Sitting-room of the MILLER home in a large small-town in Connecticut—about 7 30 in the morning of July 4th, 1906*

The room is fairly large, homely looking and cheerful in the morning sun light, furnished with scrupulous medium-priced tastelessness of the period. Beneath the two windows at left, front, a sofa with silk and satin cushions stands against the wall. At rear of sofa, a bookcase with glass doors, filled with cheap sets, extends along the remaining length of wall. In the rear wall, left, is a double doorway with sliding doors and portières, leading into a dark, windowless, back parlor. At right of this doorway, another bookcase, this time a small, open one, crammed with boys' and girls' books and the best-selling novels of many past years—books the family really have read. To the right of this bookcase is the mate of the double doorway at its left, with sliding doors and portières, this one leading to a well-lighted front parlor. In the right wall, rear, a screen door opens on a porch. Farther forward in this wall are two windows, with a writing desk and a chair between them. At center is a big, round table with a green-shaded reading lamp, the cord of the lamp running up to one of five sockets in the chandelier above. Five chairs are grouped about the table—three rockers at left, right, and right rear of it, two armchairs at rear and left rear. A medium-priced, inoffensive rug covers most of the floor. The walls are papered white with a cheerful, ugly blue design.

Voices are heard in a conversational tone from the dining-room beyond the back parlor, where the family are just finishing breakfast. Then MRS MILLER's voice, raised commandingly, "Tommy! Come back here and finish your milk!" At the same moment TOMMY appears in the doorway from the back parlor—a chubby, sun-burnt boy of eleven with dark eyes, blond hair wetted and plastered down in a part, and a shiny, good-natured face, a rim of milk visible about his lips. Bursting with bottled-up energy and a longing to get started on the Fourth, he nevertheless has hesitated obediently at his mother's call.

TOMMY (*calls back pleadingly*) Aw, I'm full, Ma. And I said excuse me and you said all right. (*His FATHER's voice is heard speaking to his mother. Then she calls "All right, Tommy," and TOMMY asks eagerly*) Can I go out now?

TOMMY (*fidgeting, but obediently*) May I, Ma?

MOTHER'S VOICE Yes. (*TOMMY jumps for the screen door to the porch at right like a sprinter released by the starting shot*)

MOTHER'S VOICE (*correctingly*). May I!

FATHER'S VOICE (*shouts after him*) ' But you set off your crackers away

from the house, remember! (But TOMMY is already through the screen door, which he leaves open behind him)

(A moment later the family appear from the back parlor, coming from the dining-room First are MILDRED and ARTHUR MILDRED is fifteen, tall and slender, with big, irregular features, resembling her father to the complete effacing of any pretense at prettiness But her big, gray eyes are beautiful, she has vivacity and a fetching smile, and everyone thinks of her as an attractive girl She is dressed in shirtwaist and skirt in the fashion of the period

(ARTHUR, the eldest of the Miller children who are still living home, is nineteen He is tall, heavy, barrel-chested and muscular, the type of football linesman of that period, with a square, stolid face, small blue eyes and thick sandy hair His manner is solemnly collegiate He is dressed in the latest college fashion of that day, which has receded a bit from the extreme of preceding years, but still runs to padded shoulders and pants half-pegged at the top, and so small at their wide-cuffed bottoms that they cannot be taken off with shoes on)

MILDRED (as they appear—inquisitively) Where are you going today, Art?

ARTHUR (with superior dignity) That's my business (He ostentatiously takes from his pocket a tobacco pouch with a big Y and class numerals stamped on it, and a heavy bulldog briar pipe with silver Y and numerals, and starts filling the pipe)

MILDRED (teasingly) Bet I know, just the same! Want me to tell you her initials? E R ! (She laughs

ARTHUR, pleased by this insinuation

at his lady-killing activities, yet finds it beneath his dignity to reply He goes to the table, lights his pipe and picks up the local morning paper, and slouches back into the armchair at left rear of table, beginning to whistle "Oh, Waltz Me Around Again, Willie" as he scans the headlines MILDRED sits on the sofa at left, front)

(Meanwhile, their mother and their AUNT LILY, their father's sister, have appeared, following them from the back parlor MRS MILLER is around fifty, a short, stout woman with fading light-brown hair sprinkled with gray, who must have been decidedly pretty as a girl in a round-faced, cute, small-featured, wide-eyed fashion She has big brown eyes, soft and maternal—a bustling, mother-of-a-family manner She is dressed in shirtwaist and skirt

(LILY MILLER, her sister-in-law, is forty-two, tall, dark and thin She conforms outwardly to the conventional type of old-maid school teacher, even to wearing glasses But behind the glasses her gray eyes are gentle and tired, and her whole atmosphere is one of shy kindness Her voice presents the greatest contrast to her appearance—soft and full of sweetness She, also, is dressed in a shirtwaist and skirt)

MRS MILLER (as they appear) Getting milk down him is like— (Suddenly she is aware of the screen door standing half open) Goodness, look at that door he's left open! The house will be alive with flies! (Rushing out to shut it) I've told him again and again—and that's all the good it does! It's just a waste of breath! (She slams the door shut)

LILY (smiling) Well, you can't expect a boy to remember to shut doors

—on the Fourth of July (*She goes diffidently to the straight-backed chair before the desk at right, front, leaving the comfortable chairs to the others*)

MRS MILLER That's you all over, Lily—always making excuses for him. You'll have him spoiled to death in spite of me (*She sinks in rocker at right of table*) Phew, I'm hot, aren't you? This is going to be a scorcher (*She picks up a magazine from the table and begins to rock, fanning herself*)

(*Meanwhile, her husband and her brother have appeared from the back parlor, both smoking cigars* NAT MILLER is in his late fifties, a tall, dark, spare man, a little stoop-shouldered, more than a little bald, dressed with an awkward attempt at sober respectability imposed upon an innate heedlessness of clothes. His long face has large, irregular, undistinguished features, but he has fine, shrewd, humorous gray eyes

(SID DAVIS, his brother-in-law is forty-five, short and fat, bald-headed, with the Puckish face of a Peck's Bad Boy who has never grown up. He is dressed in what had once been a very natty loud light suit but is now a shapeless and faded nondescript in cut and color)

SID (*as they appear*) Oh, I like the job first rate, Nat. Waterbury's a nifty old town with the lid off, when you get to know the ropes. I rang in a joke in one of my stories that tickled the folks there pink. Water-wagon—Waterbury—Waterloo!

MILLER (*grinning*) Darn good!

SID (*pleased*) I thought it was pretty fair myself (*Goes on a bit ruefully, as if oppressed by a secret sorrow*)

Yes, you can see life in Waterbury, all right—that is, if you're looking for life in Waterbury!

MRS MILLER What's that about Waterbury, Sid?

SID I was saying it's all right in its way—but there's no place like home (*As if to punctuate this remark, there begins a series of bangs from just beyond the porch outside, as TOMMY inaugurates his celebration by setting off a package of firecrackers. The assembled family jump in their chairs*)

MRS MILLER That boy! (*She rushes to the screen door and out on the porch, calling*) Tommy! You mind what your Pa told you! You take your crackers out in the back yard, you hear me!

ARTHUR (*frowning scornfully*) Fresh kid! He did it on purpose to scare us

MILLER (*grinning through his annoyance*) Darned youngster! He'll have the house afire before the day's out

SID (*grins and sings*)

"Dunno what ter call 'im
But he's mighty like a Rose—velt"

(*They all laugh*)

LILY Sid, you Crazy! (*SID beams at her. MRS MILLER comes back from the porch, still fuming*)

MRS. MILLER Well, I've made him go out back at last. Now we'll have a little peace (*As if to contradict this, the bang of firecrackers and torpedoes begins from the rear of the house, left, and continues at intervals*)

throughout the scene, not nearly so loud as the first explosion, but sufficiently emphatic to form a disturbing punctuation to the conversation)

MILLER Well, what's on the tappee for all of you today? Sid, you're coming to the Sachem Club picnic with me, of course

SID (*a bit embarrassedly*) You bet I mean I'd like to, Nat—that is, if—

MRS MILLER (*regarding her brother with smiling suspicion*) Hmm! I know what that Sachem Club picnic's always meant!

LILY (*breaks in in a forced joking tone that conceals a deep earnestness*) No, not this time, Essie Sid's a reformed character since he's been on the paper in Waterbury At least, that's what he swore to me last night

SID (*avoiding her eyes, humiliated—joking it off*) Pure as the driven snow, that's me They're running me for president of the WCTU (*They all laugh*)

MRS MILLER Sid, you're a caution You turn everything into a joke But you be careful, you hear? We're going to have dinner in the evening tonight, you know—the best shore dinner you ever tasted and I don't want you coming home—well, not able to appreciate it

LILY Oh, I know he'll be careful today Won't you, Sid?

SID (*more embarrassed than ever—joking it off melodramatically*) Lily, I swear to you if any man offers me a drink, I'll kill him—that is, if he changes his mind! (*They all laugh*

except LILY, who bites her lip and stiffens.)

MRS MILLER No use talking to him, Lily You ought to know better by this time We can only hope for the best

MILLER Now, you women stop picking on Sid It's the Fourth of July and even a downtrodden newspaperman has a right to enjoy himself when he's on his holiday

MRS MILLER I wasn't thinking only of Sid

MILLER (*with a wink at the others*). What, are you insinuating I ever—?

MRS MILLER Well, to do you justice, no, not what you'd really call— But I've known you to come back from this darned Sachem Club picnic— Well, I didn't need any little bird to whisper that you'd been some place besides to the well! (*She smiles good-naturedly MILLER chuckles*)

SID (*after a furtive glance at the stiff and silent LILY—changes the subject abruptly by turning to ARTHUR*) How are you spending the festive Fourth, Boola-Boola? (*ARTHUR stiffens dignifiedly*)

MILDRED (*teasingly*) I can tell you, if he won't

MRS MILLER (*smiling*) Off to the Rands', I suppose.

ARTHUR (*with dignity*) I and Bert Turner are taking Elsie and Ethel Rand canoeing We're going to have a picnic lunch on Strawberry Island And this evening I'm staying at the Rands' for dinner.

MILLER. You're accounted for, then. How about you, Mid?

MILDRED. I'm going to the beach to Anne Culver's

ARTHUR (*sarcastically*). Of course, there won't be any boys present! Johnny Dodd, for example?

MILDRED (*giggles—then with a coquettish toss of her head*). Pooh! what do I care for him? He's not the only pebble on the beach

MILLER. Stop your everlasting teasing, you two. How about you and Lily, Essie?

MRS MILLER. I don't know. I haven't made any plans. Have you, Lily?

LILY (*quietly*). No. Anything you want to do

MRS MILLER. Well, I thought we'd just sit around and rest and talk

MILLER. You can gossip any day. This is the Fourth. Now, I've got a better suggestion than that. What do you say to an automobile ride? I'll get out the Buick and we'll drive around town and out to the light-house and back. Then Sid and I will let you off here, or anywhere you say, and we'll go on to the picnic

MRS MILLER. I'd love it. Wouldn't you, Lily?

LILY. It would be nice

MILLER. Then, that's all settled.

SID (*embarrassedly*). Lily, want to come with me to the fireworks display at the beach tonight?

MRS MILLER. That's right, Sid. You take her out. Poor Lily never has any fun, always sitting home with me

LILY (*flustered and grateful*). I—I'd like to, Sid, thank you. (*Then an apprehensive look comes over her face*). Only not if you come home—you know

SID (*again embarrassed and humiliated—again joking it off, solemnly*). Evil-minded, I'm afraid, Nat. I hate to say it of your sister. (*They all laugh. Even LILY cannot suppress a smile*)

ARTHUR (*with heavy jocularity*). Listen, Uncle Sid. Don't let me catch you and Aunt Lily spooning on a bench tonight—or it'll be my duty to call a cop!

(*SID and LILY both look painfully embarrassed at this, and the joke falls flat, except for MILDRED who can't restrain a giggle at the thought of these two ancients spooning*)

MRS MILLER (*rebukingly*). Arthur!

MILLER (*dryly*). That'll do you. Your education in kicking a football around Yale seems to have blunted your sense of humor

MRS MILLER (*suddenly—startledly*). But where's Richard? We're forgetting all about him. Why, where is that boy? I thought he came in with us from breakfast

MILDRED. I'll bet he's off somewhere writing a poem to Muriel McComber, the silly! Or pretending to write one. I think he just copies—

ARTHUR (*looking back toward the dining-room*). He's still in the din-

ing-room, reading a book (*Turning back—scornfully*) Gosh, he's always reading now It's not my idea of having a good time in vacation

MILLER (*caustically*) He read his school books, too, strange as that may seem to you That's why he came out top of his class I'm hoping before you leave New Haven they'll find time to teach you reading is a good habit

MRS MILLER (*sharply*) That reminds me, Nat I've been meaning to speak to you about those awful books Richard is reading You've got to give him a good talking to— (*She gets up from her chair*) I'll go up and get them right now I found them where he'd hid them on the shelf in his wardrobe You just wait till you see what— (*She bustles off, rear right, through the front parlor*)

MILLER (*plainly not relishing whatever is coming—to SID grumblingly*) Seems to me she might wait until the Fourth is over before bringing up— (*Then with a grin*) I know there's nothing to it, anyway When I think of the books I used to sneak off and read when I was a kid

SID Me, too I suppose Dick is deep in Nick Carter or Old Cap Collier

MILLER No, he passed that period long ago Poetry's his red meat nowadays, I think—love poetry—and socialism, too, I suspect, from some dire declarations he's made (*Then briskly*) Well, might as well get him on the carpet (*He calls*) Richard (*No answer—louder*) Richard (*No answer—then in a bellow*) Richard!

ARTHUR (*shouting*) Hey, Dick, wake up! Pa's calling you

RICHARD'S VOICE (*from the dining room*) All right I'm coming

MILLER Darn him! When he gets his nose in a book, the house could fall down and he'd never— (*RICHARD appears in the doorway from the back parlor, the book he has been reading in one hand, a finger marking his place He looks a bit startled still, reluctantly called back to earth from another world He is going on seventeen, just out of 'high school In appearance he is a perfect blend of father and mother, so much so that each is convinced he is the image of the other He has his mother's light-brown hair, his father's gray eyes, his features are neither large nor small, he is of medium height, neither fat nor thin One would not call him a handsome boy, neither is he homely But he is definitely different from both of his parents, too There is something of extreme sensitiveness added—a restless, apprehensive defiant, shy, dreamy, self-conscious intelligence about him In manner he is alternately plain simple boy and a posey actor solemnly playing a role He is dressed in prep school reflection of the college style of ARTHUR*)

RICHARD Did you want me, Pa?

MILLER I'd hoped I'd made that plain Come and sit down a while (*He points to the rocking chair at the right of table near his*)

RICHARD (*coming forward—seizing on the opportunity to play up his pre-occupation—with apologetic superiority*) I didn't hear you, Pa I was off in another world (*MILDRED slyly shoves her foot out so that he trips over it, almost falling She laughs gleefully So does ARTHUR*)

ARTHUR Good for you, Mid! That'll wake him up!

RICHARD (*grins sheepishly—all boy now*) Darn you, Mid! I'll show you! (*He pushes her back on the sofa and tickles her with his free hand, still holding the book in the other. She shrieks*)

ARTHUR Give it to her, Dick!

MILLER That's enough, now. No more roughhouse. You sit down here, Richard. (*RICHARD obediently takes the chair at right of table, opposite his father*) What were you planning to do with yourself today? Going out to the beach with Mildred?

RICHARD (*scornfully superior*) That silly skirt party! I should say not!

MILDRED He's not coming because Muriel isn't. I'll bet he's got a date with her somewhere.

RICHARD (*flushing bashfully*) You shut up! (*Then to his father*) I thought I'd just stay home, Pa—this morning, anyway.

MILLER Help Tommy set off fire-crackers, eh?

RICHARD (*drawing himself up—with dignity*) I should say not. (*Then frowning portentously*) I don't believe in this silly celebrating the Fourth of July—all this lying talk about liberty—when there is no liberty!

MILLER (*a twinkle in his eye*) Hmm.

RICHARD (*getting warmed up*) The land of the free and the home of the brave! Home of the slave is what they

ought to call it—the wage slave ground under the beel of the capitalist class, starving, crying for bread for his children, and all he gets is a stone! The Fourth of July is a stupid farce!

MILLER (*putting a hand to his mouth to conceal a grin*) Hmm. Them are mighty strong words. You'd better not repeat such sentiments outside the bosom of the family or they'll have you in jail.

SID And throw away the key.

RICHARD (*darkly*) Let them put me in jail. Put how about the freedom of speech in the Constitution, then? That must be a farce, too. (*Then he adds grimly*) No, you can celebrate your Fourth of July. I'll celebrate the day the people bring out the guillotine again and I see Pierpont Morgan being driven by in a tumbrel! (*His father and SID are greatly amused, LILY is shocked but, taking her cue from them, smiles. MILDRED stares at him in puzzled wonderment, never having heard this particular line before. Only ARTHUR betrays the outraged reaction of a patriot.*)

ARTHUR Aw say, you fresh kid, tie that bull outside! You ought to get a punch in the nose for talking that way on the Fourth!

MILLER (*solemnly*) Son, if I didn't know it was you talking, I'd think we had Emma Goldman with us.

ARTHUR Never mind, Pa. Wait till we get him down to Yale. We'll take that out of him!

RICHARD (*with high scorn*) Oh, Yale! You think there's nothing in the world besides Yale! After all, what is Yale?

ARTHUR You'll find out what!

SID (*provocatively*) Don't let them scare you, Dick Give 'em hell!

LILY (*shocked*) Sid! You shouldn't swear before—

RICHARD What do you think I am, Aunt Lily—a baby? I've heard worse than anything Uncle Sid says

MILDRED And said worse himself, I bet!

MILLER (*with a comic air of resignation*) Well, Richard, I've always found I've had to listen to at least one stump speech every Fourth I only hope getting your extra strong one right after breakfast will let me off for the rest of the day (*They all laugh now, taking this as a cue*)

RICHARD (*somberly*) That's right, laugh! After you, the deluge, you think! But look out! Supposing it comes before? Why shouldn't the workers of the world unite and rise? They have nothing to lose but their chains! (*He recites threateningly*) "The days grow hot, O Babylon! 'Tis cool beneath thy willow trees!"

MILLER Hmm That's good But where's the connection, exactly? Something from that book you're reading?

RICHARD (*superior*) No That's poetry This is prose

MILLER I've heard there was a difference between 'em What is the book?

RICHARD (*importantly*) Carlyle's "French Revolution"

MILLER. Hmm So that's where you drove the tumbrel from and piled poor old Pierpont in it (*Then seriously*) Glad you're reading it Richard It's a darn fine book

RICHARD (*with unflattering astonishment*) What, have you read it?

MILLER Well, you see, even a newspaper owner can't get out of reading a book every now and again

RICHARD (*abashed*) I—I didn't mean—I know you— (*Then enthusiastically*) Say, isn't it a great book, though—that part about Mirabeau—and about Marat and Robespierre—

MRS MILLER (*appears from the front parlor in a great state of flushed annoyance*) Never you mind Robespierre, young man! You tell me this minute where you've hidden those books! They were on the shelf in your wardrobe and now you've gone and hid them somewhere else You go right up and bring them to your father! (*RICHARD, for a second, looks suddenly guilty and crushed Then he bristles defensively*)

MILLER (*after a quick understanding glance at him*) Never mind his getting them now We'll waste the whole morning over those darned books And anyway, he has a right to keep his library to himself—that is, if they're not too— What books are they, Richard?

RICHARD (*self-consciously*) Well—there's—

MRS MILLER I'll tell you, if he won't—and you give him a good talking to (*Then, after a glance at RICHARD, mollifiedly*) Not that I blame Richard There must be some boy he

knows who's trying to show off as advanced and wicked, and he told him about—

RICHARD. No! I read about them myself, in the papers and in other books

MRS MILLER. Well, no matter how, there they were on his shelf. Two by that awful Oscar Wilde they put in jail for heaven knows what wickedness

ARTHUR (*suddenly — solemnly authoritative*) He committed bigamy (*Then as SID smothered a burst of ribald laughter*) What are you laughing at? I guess I ought to know. A fellow at college told me. His father was in England when this Wilde was pinched—and he said he remembered once his mother asked his father about it and he told her he'd committed bigamy

MILLER (*hiding a smile behind his hand*) Well then, that must be right, Arthur

MRS MILLER. I wouldn't put it past him, nor anything else. One book was called the Picture of something or other

RICHARD. "The Picture of Donian Gray." It's one of the greatest novels ever written!

MRS MILLER. Looked to me like cheap trash. And the second book was poetry. The Ballad of I forget what

RICHARD. "The Ballad of Reading Gaol," one of the greatest poems ever written (*He pronounces it Reading Goal [as in goalpost].*)

MRS MILLER. All about someone who murdered his wife and got hung, as he richly deserved, as far as I could make out. And then there were two books by that Bernard Shaw—

RICHARD. The greatest playwright alive today!

MRS MILLER. To hear him tell it, maybe! You know, Nat, the one who wrote a play about—well, never mind—that was so vile they wouldn't even let it play in New York!

MILLER. Hmm. I remember

MRS MILLER. One was a book of his plays and the other had a long title. I couldn't make head or tail of, only it wasn't a play

RICHARD (*proudly*). "The Quintessence of Ibsenism."

MILDRED. Phew! Good gracious, what a name! What does it mean, Dick? I'll bet he doesn't know

RICHARD (*outraged*). I do, too, know! It's about Ibsen, the greatest playwright since Shakespeare!

MRS MILLER. Yes, there was a book of plays by that Ibsen there, too! And poems by Swin something—

RICHARD. "Poems and Ballads" by Swinburne, Ma. The greatest poet since Shelley! He tells the truth about real love!

MRS MILLER. Love! Well, all I can say is, from reading here and there, that if he wasn't flung in jail along with Wilde, he should have been. Some of the things I simply couldn't read, they were so indecent—All about—well, I can't tell you before Lily and Mildred.

SID (*with a wink at RICHARD—jokingly*) Remember, I'm next on that one, Dick I feel the need of a little poetical education

LILY (*scandalized, but laughing*) Sid! Aren't you ashamed?

MRS MILLER This is no laughing matter And then there was Kipling—but I suppose he's not so bad And last there was a poem—a long one—the Rubay— What is it, Richard?

RICHARD "The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam" That's the best of all!

MILLER Oh, I've read that, Essie—got a copy down at the office

SID (*enthusiastically*) So have I It's a poppin'!

LILY (*with shy excitement*) I—I've read it, too—at the library I like—some parts of it

MRS MILLER (*scandalized*) Why, Lily!

MILLER Everybody's reading that now, Essie—and it don't seem to do them any harm There's fine things in it, seems to me—true things

MRS MILLER (*a bit bewildered and uncertain now*) Why, Nat, I don't see how you— It looked terrible blasphemous—parts I read

SID Remember this one (*He quotes rhetorically*) "Oh Thou, who didst with pitfall and gin beset the path I was to wander in—" Now, I've always noticed how beset my path was with gin—in the past, you understand! (*He casts a joking side glance at LILY*) The others laugh But LILY is in a melancholy dream and hasn't heard him)

MRS MILLER (*tartly, but evidently suppressing her usual smile where he is concerned*) You would pick out the ones with liquor in them!

LILY (*suddenly—with a sad pathos, quotes awkwardly and shyly*) I like—because it's true

"The Moving Finger writes, and having writ,
Moves on nor all your Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it"

MRS MILLER (*astonished, as are all the others*) Why, Lily, I never knew you to recite poetry before!

LILY (*immediately guilty and apologetic*) I—it just stuck in my memory somehow

RICHARD (*looking at her as if he had never seen her before*) Good for you, Aunt Lily! (*Then enthusiastically*) But that isn't the best The best is

"A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,
A Jug of Wine, A Loaf of Bread—
and Thou
Beside me singing in the Wilderness—"

ARTHUR (*who, bored to death by all this poetry quoting, has wandered over to the window at rear of desk, right*) Hey! Look who's coming up the walk— Old Man McComber!

MILLER (*irritably*) Dave? Now what in thunder does that damned old—Sid, I can see where we never are going to get to that picnic

MRS MILLER (*vexatiously*) He'll know we're in this early, too No use lying (*Then appalled by another thought*) That Norah—she's that thick, she never can answer the front door right unless I tell her each time Nat, you've got to talk to Dave I'll have her show him in here Lily you run up the back stairs and get your things on I'll be up in a second Nat, you get rid of him the first second you can! Whatever can the old fool want— (*She and LILY hurry out through the back parlor*)

ARTHUR I'm going to beat it—just time to catch the eight-twenty trolley

MILDRED I've got to catch that, too. Wait till I get my hat, Art! (*She rushes into the back parlor*)

ARTHUR (*shouts after her*) I can't wait You can catch up with me if you hurry (*He turns at the back-parlor door—with a grin*) McComber may be coming to see if your intentions toward his daughter are dishonorable, Dick! You'd better beat it while your shoes are good! (*He disappears through the back-parlor door, laughing*)

RICHARD (*a bit shaken, but putting on a brave front*) Think I'm scared of him?

MILLER (*gazing at him—frowning*) Can't imagine what— But it's to complain about something, I know that I only wish I didn't have to be pleasant with the old buzzard—but he's about the most valuable advertiser I've got

SID (*sympathetically*) I know But tell him to go to hell, anyway He needs that ad more than you

(*The sound of the bell comes from the rear of the house, off left from back parlor*)

MILLER There he is You clear out, Dick—but come right back as soon as he's gone, you hear? I'm not through with you, yet

RICHARD Yes, Pa

MILLER You better clear out, too, Sid You know Dave doesn't approve jokes

SID And loves me like poison! Come on, Dick, we'll go out and help Tom—my celebrate (*He takes RICHARD'S arm and they also disappear through the back-parlor door MILLER glances through the front parlor toward the front door, then calls in a tone of strained heartiness*)

MILLER Hello, Dave Come right in here What good wind blows you around on this glorious Fourth? (*A flat, brittle voice answers him "Good morning," and a moment later DAVID MC COMBER appears in the doorway from the front parlor He is a thin, dried-up little man with a head so large for his body perched on a scrawny neck, and a long solemn horse face with deep-set little black eyes, a blunt formless nose and a tiny slit of a mouth He is about the same age as MILLER but is entirely bald, and looks ten years older He is dressed with a prim neatness in shiny old black clothes*)

MILLER Here, sit down and make yourself comfortable (*Holding out the cigar box*) Have a cigar?

MC COMBER (*sitting down in the chair at the right of table—acidly*). You're forgetting I never smoke.

MILLER (*forcing a laugh at himself*) That's so. So I was Well, I'll smoke alone then (*He bites off the end of the cigar viciously, as if he wished it were MC COMBER's head, and sits down opposite him*)

MC COMBER You asked me what brings me here, so I'll come to the point at once I regret to say it's something disagreeable — disgraceful would be nearer the truth—and it concerns your son, Richard!

MILLER (*beginning to bristle—but calmly*) Oh, come now, Dave, I'm sure Richard hasn't—

MC COMBER (*sharply*) And I'm positive he has You're not accusing me of being a liar, I hope

MILLER No one said anything about liar I only meant you're surely mistaken if you think—

MC COMBER I'm not mistaken I have proof of everything in his own handwriting!

MILLER (*sharply*) Let's get down to brass tacks Just what is it you're charging him with?

MC COMBER With being dissolute and blasphemous—with deliberately attempting to corrupt the morals of my young daughter, Muriel

MILLER Then I'm afraid I will have to call you a liar, Dave!

MC COMBER (*without taking offense—in the same flat, brittle voice*) I thought you'd get around to that, so I brought some of the proofs with me I've a lot more of 'em at home (*He takes a wallet from his inside*

coat pocket, selects five or six slips of paper, and holds them out to MILLER) These are good samples of the rest My wife discovered them in one of Muriel's bureau drawers hidden under the underwear They're all in his handwriting, you can't deny it Anyway, Muriel's confessed to me he wrote them You read them and then say I'm a liar (*MILLER has taken the slips and is reading them frowningly MC COMBER talks on*) Evidently you've been too busy to take the right care about Richard's bringing up or what he's allowed to read—though I can't see why his mother failed in her duty But that's your misfortune, and none of my business But Muriel is my business and I can't and I won't have her in innocence exposed to the contamination of a young man whose mind, judging from his choice of reading matter, is as foul—

MILLER (*making a tremendous effort to control his temper*) Why, you damned old fool! Can't you see Richard's only a fool kid who's just at the stage when he's out to rebel against all authority, and so he grabs at everything radical to read and wants to pass it on to his elders and his girl and boy friends to show off what a young hellion he is! Why, at heart you'd find Richard is just as innocent and as big a kid as Muriel is! (*He pushes the slips of paper across the table contemptuously*) This stuff doesn't mean anything to me—that is, nothing of what you think it means If you believe this would corrupt Muriel, then you must believe she's easily corrupted! But I'll bet you'd find she knows a lot more about life than you give her credit for—and can guess a stork didn't bring her down your chimney!

MC COMBER. Now you're insulting my daughter. I won't forget that.

MILLER. I'm not insulting her I think Muriel is a darn nice girl That's why I'm giving her credit for ordinary good sense. I'd say the same about my own Mildred, who's the same age

MC COMBER I know nothing about your Mildred except that she's known all over as a flirt (*Then more sharply*) Well, I knew you'd prove obstinate, but I certainly never dreamed you'd have the impudence, after reading those papers, to claim your son was innocent of all wrongdoing!

MILLER And what did you dream I'd do?

MC COMBER Do what it's your plain duty to do as a citizen to protect other people's children! Take and give him a hiding he'd remember to the last day of his life! You'd ought to do it for his sake, if you had any sense—unless you want him to end up in jail!

MILLER (*his fists clenched, leans across the table*) Dave, I've stood all I can stand from you! You get out! And get out quick, if you don't want a kick in the rear to help you!

MC COMBER (*again in his flat, brittle voice, slowly getting to his feet*) You needn't lose your temper I'm only demanding you do your duty by your own as I've already done by mine I'm punishing Muriel She's not to be allowed out of the house for a month and she's to be in bed every night by eight sharp And yet she's blameless, compared to that—

MILLER. I said I'd had enough out of you, Dave! (*He makes a threatening movement*)

MC COMBER. You needn't lay hands on me I'm going But there's one thing more (*He takes a letter from his wallet*) Here's a letter from Muriel for your son (*Puts it on the table*) It makes clear, I think, how she's come to think about him, now that her eyes have been opened I hope he heeds what's inside—for his own good and yours—because if I ever catch him hanging about my place again I'll have him arrested! And don't think I'm not going to make you regret the insults you've heaped on me I'm taking the advertisement for my store out of your paper—and it won't go in again, I tell you, not unless you apologize in writing and promise to punish—

MILLER I'll see you in hell first! As for your damned old ad, take it out and go to hell!

MC COMBER That's plain bluff You know how badly you need it So do I (*He starts stiffly for the door*)

MILLER Here! Listen a minute! I'm just going to call your bluff and tell you that, whether you want to reconsider your decision or not, I'm going to refuse to print your damned ad after tomorrow! Put that in your pipe and smoke it! Furthermore, I'll start a campaign to encourage outside capital to open a dry-goods store in opposition to you that won't be the public swindle I can prove yours is!

MC COMBER (*a bit shaken by this threat—but in the same flat tone*). I'll sue you for libel

MILLER When I get through, there won't be a person in town will buy a dishrag in your place!

MC COMBER (*more shaken, his eyes shifting about furtively*) That's all bluff You wouldn't dare— (*Then finally he says uncertainly*) Well, good day (*And turns and goes out* NAT stands looking after him Slowly the anger drains from his face and leaves him looking a bit sick and disgusted SID appears from the back parlor He is nursing a burn on his right hand, but his face is one broad grin of satisfaction)

SID I burned my hand with one of Tommy's damned firecrackers and came in to get some vaseline I was listening to the last of your scrap Good for you, Nat! You sure gave him hell!

MILLER (*dully*) Much good it'll do He knows it was all talk

SID That's just what he don't know, Nat The old skinflint has a guilty conscience

MILLER Well, anyone who knows me knows I wouldn't use my paper for a dirty, spiteful trick like that—no matter what he did to me

SID Yes, everyone knows you're an old sucker, Nat, too decent for your own good But McComber never saw you like this before I tell you you scared the pants off him (*He chuckles*)

MILLER (*still dejectedly*) I don't know what made me let go like that The hell of skunks like McComber is that after being with them ten minutes you become as big skunks as they are

SID (*notices the slips of paper on the table*) What's this? Something he brought? (*He picks them up and starts to read*)

MILLER (*grimly*) Samples of the new freedom—from those books Essie found—that Richard's been passing on to Mune! to educate her They're what started the rumpus (*Then frowning*) I've got to do something about that young anarchist or he'll be getting me, and himself, in a peck of trouble (*Then pathetically helpless*) But what can I do? Putting the curb bit on would make him worse Then he'd have a harsh tyrant to defy He'd love that, darn him!

SID (*has been reading the slips, a broad grin on his face—suddenly he whistles*) Phew! This is a warm lulu for fair! (*He recites with a joking intensity*)

"My life is bitter with thy love;
thine eyes
Blind me, thy tresses burn me,
thy sharp sighs
Divide my flesh and spirit with
soft sound—"

MILLER (*with a grim smile*) Hmm I missed that one That must be Mr Swinburne's copy I've never read him, but I've heard something like that was the matter with him

SID Yes, it's labelled Swinburne—"Anactoria" Whatever that is But wait, watch and listen! The worst is yet to come! (*He recites with added comic intensity*)

"That I could drink thy veins as
wine, and eat
Thy breasts like honey, that from
face to feet

Thy body were abolished and
consumed,
And in my flesh thy very flesh
entombed!"

MILLER (*an irrepressible boyish grin coming to his face*) Hell and hallelujah! Just picture old Dave digesting that for the first time! Gosh, I'd give a lot to have seen his face! (*Then a trace of shocked reproof showing in his voice*) But it's no joking matter That stuff is warm—too damned warm, if you ask me! I don't like this a damned bit, Sid That's no kind of thing to be sending a decent girl (*More worriedly*) I thought he was really stuck on her—as one gets stuck on a decent girl at his age—all moonshine and holding hands and a kiss now and again But this looks—I wonder if he is hanging around her to see what he can get? (*Angrily*) By God, if that's true, he deserves that licking McComber says it's my duty to give him! I've got to draw the line somewhere!

SID Yes, it won't do to have him getting any decent girl in trouble

MILLER The only thing I can do is put it up to him straight (*With pride*) Richard'll stand up to his guns, no matter what I've never known him to lie to me

SID (*at a noise from the back parlor, looks that way—in a whisper*) Then now's your chance I'll beat it and leave you alone—see if the women folks are ready upstairs We ought to get started soon—if we're ever going to make that picnic (*He is halfway to the entrance to the front parlor as RICHARD enters from the back parlor, very evidently nervous about MC COMBER's call*)

RICHARD (*adopting a forced, innocent tone*) How's your hand, Uncle Sid?

SID All right, Dick, thanks—only hurts a little (*He disappears* MILLER watches his son frowningly RICHARD gives him a quick side glance and grows more guiltily self-conscious)

RICHARD (*forcing a snicker*) Gee, Pa, Uncle Sid's a bigger kid than Tommy is He was throwing firecrackers in the air and catching them on the back of his hand and throwing 'em off again just before they went off—and one came and he wasn't quick enough, and it went off almost on top of—

MILLER Never mind that I've got something else to talk to you about besides firecrackers

RICHARD (*apprehensively*) What, Pa?

MILLER (*suddenly puts both hands on his shoulders—quietly*) Look here, Son I'm going to ask you a question, and I want an honest answer I warn you beforehand if the answer is "yes" I'm going to punish you and punish you hard because you'll have done something no boy of mine ought to do But you've never lied to me before, I know, and I don't believe, even to save yourself punishment, you'd lie to me now, would you?

RICHARD (*impressed—with dignity*) I won't lie, Pa

MILLER Have you been trying to have something to do with Muriel—something you shouldn't—you know what I mean

RICHARD (*stares at him for a moment, as if he couldn't comprehend—then, as he does, a look of shocked indignation comes over his face*) No! What do you think I am, Pa? I never would! She's not that kind! Why, I—I love her! I'm going to marry her—after I get out of college! She's said she would! We're engaged!

MILLER (*with great relief*) All right! That's all I wanted to know! We won't talk any more about it (*He gives him an approving pat on the back*)

RICHARD I don't see how you could think— Did that old idiot McComber say that about me?

MILLER (*joking now*) Shouldn't call your future father-in-law names, should you? 'Tain't respectful (*Then after a glance at RICHARD's indignant face—points to the slips of paper on the table*) Well, you can't exactly blame old Dave, can you, when you read through that literature you wished on his innocent daughter?

RICHARD (*sees the slips for the first time and is overcome by embarrassment, which he immediately tries to cover up with a superior carelessness*) Oh, so that's why! He found those, did he? I told her to be careful— Well, it'll do him good to read the truth about life for once and get rid of his old-fogy ideas

MILLER I'm afraid I've got to agree with him, though, that they're hardly fit reading for a young girl (*Then with subtle flattery*) They're all well enough, in their way, for you who're a man, but— Think it over, and see if you don't agree with me

RICHARD (*embarrassedly*). Aw, I only did it because I liked them—and I wanted her to face life as it is! She's so darned afraid of life—afraid of her Old Man—afraid of people saying this or that about her—afraid of being in love—afraid of everything! She's even afraid to let me kiss her! I thought, maybe, reading those things—they're beautiful, aren't they, Pa?— I thought they would give her the spunk to lead her own life, and not be—always thinking of being afraid.

MILLER I see. Well, I'm afraid she's still afraid (*He takes the letter from the table*) Here's a letter from her he said to give you (*RICHARD takes the letter from him uncertainly, his expression changing to one of apprehension* **MILLER** *adds with a kindly smile*) You better be prepared for a bit of a blow! But never mind! There's lots of other fish in the sea (*RICHARD is not listening to him, but staring at the letter with a sort of fascinated dread* **MILLER** *looks into his son's face a second, then turns away, trouble and embarrassed*) Darn it! I better go upstairs and get rigged out or I never will get to that picnic (*He moves awkwardly and self-consciously off through the front parlor* **RICHARD** *continues to stare at the letter for a moment—then girds up his courage and tears it open and begins to read swiftly* *As he reads his face grows more and more wounded and tragic, until at the end his mouth draws down at the corners, as if he were about to break into tears* *With an effort he forces them back and his face grows flushed with humiliation and wronged anger*)

RICHARD (*blurts out to himself*) The little coward! I hate her! She can't

treat me like that! I'll show her! (At the sound of voices from the front parlor, he quickly shoves the letter into the inside pocket of his coat and does his best to appear calm and indifferent, even attempting to whistle "Wasting at the Church." But the whistle peters out miserably as his mother, LILY and SID enter from the front parlor. They are dressed in all the elaborate paraphernalia of motoring at that period—linen dusters, veils, goggles, SID in a snappy cap.)

MRS MILLER Well, we're about ready to start at last, thank goodness! Let's hope no more callers are on the way. What did that McComber want, Richard, do you know? Sid couldn't tell us.

RICHARD You can search me. Ask Pa.

MRS MILLER (immediately sensing something "down" in his manner—going to him worriedly) Why, whatever's the matter with you, Richard? You sound as if you'd lost your last friend! What is it?

RICHARD (desperately) I—I don't feel so well—my stomach's sick.

MRS MILLER (immediately all sympathy—smoothing his hair back from his forehead) You poor boy! What

a shame—on the Fourth, too, of all days! (Turning to the others) Maybe I better stay home with him, if he's sick.

LILY Yes, I'll stay, too.

RICHARD (more desperately) No! You go, Ma! I'm not really sick. I'll be all right. You go. I want to be alone! (Then, as a louder bang comes from in back as TOMMY sets off a cannon cracker, he jumps to his feet) Damn Tommy and his damned fire-crackers! You can't get any peace in this house with that damned kid around! Damn the Fourth of July, anyway! I wish we still belonged to England! (He strides off in an indignant fury of misery through the front parlor.)

MRS MILLER (stares after him worriedly—then sighs philosophically) Well, I guess he can't be so very sick—after that. (She shakes her head) He's a queer boy. Sometimes I can't make head or tail of him.

MILLER (calls from the front door beyond the back parlor) Come along, folks. Let's get started.

SID We're coming, Nat. (He and the two women move off through the front parlor.)

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE—Dining-room of the MILLER home—a little after 6 o'clock in the evening of the same day.

The room is much too small for the medium-priced, formidable dining-room set, especially now when all the leaves of the table are in. At left,

toward rear, is a double doorway with sliding doors and pottières leading into the back parlor. In the rear wall, left, is the door to the pantry. At the right of door is the china closet with its display of the family cut glass and fancy china. In the right wall are two windows looking out on a side lawn. In front of the windows is a heavy, ugly sideboard with three pieces of old silver on its top. In the left wall, extreme front, is a screen door opening on a side porch. A dark rug covers most of the floor. The table, with a chair at each end, left and right, three chairs on the far side, facing front, and two on the near side, their backs to front, takes up most of the available space. The walls are papered in a somber brown and dark-red design.

MRS MILLER is supervising and helping the Second Girl, NORAH, in the setting of the table. NORAH is a clumsy, heavy-handed, heavy-footed, long-jawed, beamingly good-natured young Irish girl—a "greenhorn."

MRS MILLER I really think you better put on the lights, Norah. It's getting so cloudy out, and this pesky room is so dark, anyway.

NORAH Yes, Mum. (She stretches awkwardly over the table to reach the chandelier that is suspended from the middle of the ceiling and manages to turn one light on—scornfully.) Arrah, the contraption!

MRS MILLER (worriedly.) Careful!

NORAH Careful as can be, Mum. (But in moving around to reach the next bulb she jars heavily against the table.)

MRS MILLER 'There! I knew it! I do wish you'd watch—'

NORAH (a flustered appeal in her voice.) Arrah, what have I done wrong now?

MRS MILLER (draws a deep breath—then sighs helplessly.) Oh, nothing. Never mind the rest of the lights. You might as well go out in the kitchen and wait until I ring.

NORAH (relieved and cheerful again.) Yes, Mum. (She starts for the pantry.)

MRS MILLER But there's one thing— (NORAH turns apprehensively.) No, two things—things I've told you over and over, but you always forget. Don't pass the plates on the wrong side at dinner tonight, and do be careful not to let that pantry door slam behind you. Now you will try to remember, won't you?

NORAH Yes, Mum. (She goes into the pantry and shuts the door behind her with exaggerated care as MRS MILLER watches her apprehensively. MRS MILLER sighs and reaches up with difficulty and turns on another of the four lights in the chandelier. As she is doing so, LILY enters from the back parlor.)

LILY Here, let me do that, Essie. I'm taller. You'll only strain yourself. (She quickly lights the other two bulbs.)

MRS MILLER (gratefully.) Thank you, Lily. It's a stretch for me, I'm getting so fat.

LILY But where's Norah? Why didn't she—?

MRS MILLER (exasperatedly.) Oh, that girl! Don't talk about her! She'll

be the death of me! She's that thick, you honestly wouldn't believe it possible

LILY (*smiling*) Why, what did she do now?

MRS MILLER Oh, nothing She means all right

LILY. Anything else I can do, Essie?

MRS MILLER Well, she's got the table all wrong We'll have to reset it But you're always helping me It isn't fair to ask you—in your vacation You need your rest after teaching a pack of wild Indians of kids all year

LILY (*beginning to help with the table*) You know I love to help It makes me feel I'm some use in this house instead of just sponging—

MRS MILLER (*indignantly*) Sponging! You pay, don't you?

LILY Almost nothing And you and Nat only take that little to make me feel better about living with you (*Forcing a smile*) I don't see how you stand me—having a cranky old maid around all the time.

MRS MILLER What nonsense you talk! As if Nat and I weren't only too tickled to death to have you! Lily Miller, I've no patience with you when you go on like that We've been over this a thousand times before, and still you go on! Crazy, that's what it is! (*She changes the subject abruptly*) What time's it getting to be?

LILY (*looking at her watch*). Quarter past six

MRS MILLER I do hope those men folks aren't going to be late for dinner (*She sighs*) But I suppose with that darned Sachem Club picnic it's more likely than not (*Lily looks worried, and sighs* MRS MILLER gives her a quick side glance) I see you've got your new dress on

LILY (*embarrassedly*) Yes, I thought—if Sid's taking me to the fireworks—I ought to spruce up a little

MRS MILLER (*looking away*) Hmm (*A pause—then she says with an effort to be casual*) You mustn't mind if Sid comes home feeling a bit—gay I expect Nat to—and we'll have to listen to all those old stories of his about when he was a boy You know what those picnics are, and Sid'd be running into all his old friends

LILY (*agitatedly*) I don't think he will—this time—not after his promise

MRS MILLER (*avoiding looking at her*) I know But men are weak (*Then quickly*) That was a good notion of Nat's, getting Sid the job on the Waterbury Standard All he ever needed was to get away from the rut he was in here He's the kind that's the victim of his friends He's easily led—but there's no real harm in him, you know that (*Lily keeps silent, her eyes downcast* MRS MILLER goes on meaningly) He's making good money in Waterbury, too—thirty-five a week He's in a better position to get married than he ever was

LILY (*stiffly*) Well, I hope he finds a woman who's willing—though after he's through with his betting on horse races, and dice, and playing

Kelly pool, there won't be much left for a wife—even if there was nothing else he spent his money on

MRS MILLER Oh, he'd give up all that—for the right woman (*Suddenly she comes directly to the point*) Lily, why don't you change your mind and marry Sid and reform him? You love him and always have—

LILY (*stiffly*) I can't love a man who drinks

MRS MILLER You can't fool me I know darned well you love him And he loves you and always has

LILY Never enough to stop drinking for (*Cutting off MRS MILLER's reply*) No, it's no good in your talking, Essie We've been over this a thousand times before and I'll always feel the same as long as Sid's the same If he gave me proof he'd—but even then I don't believe I could It's sixteen years since I broke off our engagement, but what made me break it off is as clear to me today as it was then It was what he'd be liable to do now to anyone who married him—his taking up with bad women

MRS MILLER (*protests half-heartedly*) But he's always sworn he got raked into that party and never had anything to do with those harlots.

LILY Well, I don't believe him—didn't then and don't now I do believe he didn't deliberately plan to, but— Oh, it's no good talking, Essie What's done is done But you know how much I like Sid—in spite of everything I know he was just born to be what he is—irresponsible, never meaning to harm but harming in spite of himself. But don't talk to

me about marrying him—because I never could.

MRS MILLER (*angrily*) He's a dumb fool—a stupid dumb fool, that's what he is!

LILY (*quietly*). No He's just Sid.

MRS MILLER It's a shame for you—a measly shame—you that would have made such a wonderful wife for any man—that ought to have your own home and children!

LILY (*winces but puts her arm around her affectionately—gently*). Now don't you go feeling sorry for me I won't have that Here I am, thanks to your and Nat's kindness, with the best home in the world, and as for the children, I feel the same love for yours as if they were mine, and I didn't have the pain of bearing them And then there are all the boys and girls I teach every year I like to feel I'm a sort of second mother to them and helping them to grow up to be good men and women. So I don't feel such a useless old maid, after all.

MRS. MILLER (*kisses her impulsively—her voice husky*) You're a good woman, Lily—too good for the rest of us (*She turns away, wiping a tear furtively—then abruptly changing the subject*) Good gracious, if I'm not forgetting one of the most important things! I've got to warn that Tommy against giving me away to Nat about the fish He knows, because I had to send him to market for it, and he's liable to burst out laughing—

LILY Laughing about what?

MRS MILLER (*gustily*) Well, I've never told you, because it seemed

sort of a sneaking trick, but you know how Nat carries on about not being able to eat bluefish

LILY. I know he says there's a certain oil in it that poisons him

MRS MILLER (*chuckling*) Poisons him, nothing! He's been eating bluefish for years—only I tell him each time it's weakfish. We're having it tonight—and I've got to warn that young imp to keep his face straight

LILY (*laughing*) Aren't you ashamed, Essie?

MRS MILLER Not much, I'm not! I like bluefish! (*She laughs*) Where is Tommy? In the sitting-room?

LILY No, Richard's there alone. I think Tommy's out on the piazza with Mildred. (*MRS MILLER bustles out through the back parlor. As soon as she is gone, the smile fades from LILY's lips. Her face grows sad and she again glances nervously at her watch. RICHARD appears from the back parlor, moving in an aimless way. His face wears a set expression of bitter gloom, he exudes tragedy. For RICHARD, after his first outburst of grief and humiliation, has begun to take a masochistic satisfaction in his great sorrow, especially in the concern which it arouses in the family circle. On seeing his aunt, he gives her a dark look and turns and is about to stalk back toward the sitting-room when she speaks to him pityingly.*) Feel any better, Richard?

RICHARD (*somberly*) I'm all right, Aunt Lily. You mustn't worry about me.

LILY (*going to him*) But I do worry about you. I hate to see you so upset.

RICHARD. It doesn't matter. Nothing matters.

LILY (*puts her arm around him sympathetically*) You really mustn't let yourself take it so seriously. You know, something happens and things like that come up, and we think there's no hope—

RICHARD Things like what come up?

LILY What's happened between you and Muriel?

RICHARD (*with disdain*) Oh, her! I wasn't even thinking about her. I was thinking about life.

LILY But then—if we really, really love—why, then something else is bound to happen soon that changes everything again, and it's all as it was before the misunderstanding, and everything works out all right in the end. That's the way it is with life.

RICHARD (*with a tragic sneer*) Life! Life is a joke! And everything comes out all wrong in the end!

LILY (*a little shocked*) You mustn't talk that way. But I know you don't mean it.

RICHARD I do too mean it! You can have your silly optimism, if you like, Aunt Lily. But don't ask me to be so blind. I'm a pessimist! (*Then with an air of cruel cynicism*) As for Muriel, that's all dead and past. I was only kidding her, anyway, just to have a little fun, and she took it seriously, like a fool. (*He forces a cruel smile to his lips*) You know what they say about women and trolley cars, Aunt Lily: there's always another one along in a minute.

LILY (*really shocked this time*) I don't like you when you say such horrible, cynical things. It isn't nice.

RICHARD Nice! That's all you women think of! I'm proud to be a cynic. It's the only thing you can be when you really face life. I suppose you think I ought to be heartbroken about Mune!—a little coward that's afraid to say her soul's her own, and keeps tied to her father's apron strings! Well, not for mine! There's plenty of other fish in the sea! (*As he is finishing, his mother comes back through the back parlor*)

MRS MILLER Why, hello. You here, Richard? Getting hungry, I suppose?

RICHARD (*indignantly*) I'm not hungry a bit! That's all you think of, Ma—food!

MRS MILLER Well, I must say I've never noticed you to hang back at meal times. (*To LILY*) What's that he was saying about fish in the sea?

LILY (*smiling*) He says he's through with Mune! now.

MRS MILLER (*staring—giving her son a rebuking look*) She's through with him, he means! The idea of your sending a nice girl like her things out of those indecent books! (*Deeply offended, RICHARD disdains to reply but stalks woundedly to the screen door at left, front, and puts a hand on the knob*) Where are you going?

RICHARD (*quotes from "Candida" in a hollow voice*) "Out, then, into the night with me!" (*He stalks out, slamming the door behind him*)

MRS MILLER (*calls*) Well, don't you go far, 'cause dinner'll be ready

in a minute, and I'm not coming running after you! (*She turns to LILY with a chuckle*) Goodness, that boy! He ought to be on the stage! (*She mimics*) "Out—into the night"—and it isn't even dark yet! He got that out of one of those books, I suppose. Do you know, I'm actually grateful to old Dave McComber for putting an end to his nonsense with Mune! I never did approve of Richard getting so interested in girls. He's not old enough for such silliness. Why, seems to me it was only yesterday he was still a baby. (*She sighs—then matter-of-factly*) Well, nothing to do now till those men turn up. No use standing here like gawks. We might as well go in the sitting-room and be comfortable.

LILY (*the nervous, worried note in her voice again*) Yes, we might as well. (*They go out through the back parlor. They have no sooner disappeared than the screen door is opened cautiously and RICHARD comes back in the room*)

RICHARD (*stands inside the door, looking after them—quotes bitterly*) "They do not know the secret in the poet's heart." (*He comes nearer the table and surveys it, especially the cut-glass dish containing olives, with contempt and mutters disdainfully*) Food! (*But the dish of olives seems to fascinate him and presently he has approached nearer, and stealthily lifts a couple and crams them into his mouth. He is just reaching out for more when the pantry door is opened slightly and NORAH peers in*)

NORAH Mister Dick, you thief, lave them olives alone or the missus'll be swearing it was me at them!

RICHARD (*draws back his hand as if he had been stung—too flustered to*

be anything but guilty boy for a second) I—I wasn't eating—

NORAH Oho, no, of course not, devil fear you, you was only feeling their pulse! *(Then warningly)* Mind what I'm saying now, or I'll have to tell on you to protect me good name! *(She draws back into the pantry, closing the door)* RICHARD stands, a prey to feelings of bitterest humiliation and seething revolt against everyone and everything A low whistle comes from just outside the porch door He starts Then a masculine voice calls "Hey, Dick" He goes over to the screen door grumpily—then as he recognizes the owner of the voice, his own as he answers becomes respectful and admiring)

RICHARD Oh, hello, Wint Come on in *(He opens the door and WINT SELBY enters and stands just inside the door)* SELBY is nineteen, a classmate of ARTHUR's at Yale He is a typical, good-looking college boy of the period, not the athletic but the hell-raising sport type He is tall, blond, dressed in extreme collegiate cut)

WINT *(as he enters—warningly, in a low tone)* Keep it quiet, Kid I don't want the folks to know I'm here Tell Art I want to see him a second—on the QT

RICHARD Can't He's up at the Rands—won't be home before ten, anyway

WINT *(irritably)* Damn, I thought he'd be here for dinner *(More irritably)* Hell, that gums the works for fair!

RICHARD *(ingratiatingly)* What is it, Wint? Can't I help?

WINT *(gives him an appraising glance)* I might tell you, if you can keep your face shut

RICHARD I can

WINT Well, I ran into a couple of swift babies from New Haven this after, and I dated them up for tonight, thinking I could catch Art But now it's too late to get anyone else and I'll have to pass it up I'm nearly broke and I can't afford to blow them both to drinks

RICHARD *(with shy eagerness)* I've got eleven dollars saved up I could loan you some

WINT *(surveys him appreciatively)* Say, you're a good sport *(Then shaking his head)* Nix, Kid, I don't want to borrow your money *(Then getting an idea)* But sav, have you got anything on for tonight?

RICHARD No

WINT Want to come along with me? *(Then quickly)* I'm not trying to lead you astray, understand But it'll be a help if you would just sit around with Belle and feed her a few drinks while I'm off with Edith *(He winks)* See what I mean? You don't have to do anything, not even take a glass of beer—unless you want to.

RICHARD *(boastfully)* Aw, what do you think I am—a rube?

WINT. You mean you're game for anything that's doing?

RICHARD Sure I am!

WINT Ever been out with any girls—I mean, real swift ones that there's something doing with, not these dead Janes around here?

RICHARD (*lies boldly*) Aw, what do you think? Sure I have!

WINT Ever drank anything besides sodas?

RICHARD Sure Lots of times Beer and sloe-gin fizz and—Manhattans

WINT (*impressed*) Hell, you know more than I thought (*Then considering*) Can you fix it so your folks won't get wise? I don't want your old man coming after me You can get back by half-past ten or eleven, though, all right Think you can cook up some lie to cover that? (*As Richard hesitates—encouraging him*) Ought to be easy—on the Fourth

RICHARD Sure Don't worry about that

WINT But you've got to keep your face closed about this, you hear?—to Art and everybody else I tell you straight, I wouldn't ask you to come if I wasn't in a hole—and if I didn't know you were coming down to Yale next year, and didn't think you're giving me the straight goods about having been around before I don't want to lead you astray

RICHARD (*scornfully*) Aw, I told you that was silly

WINT Well, you be at the Pleasant Beach House at half-past nine then Come in the back room And don't forget to grab some cloves to take the booze off your breath

RICHARD Aw, I know what to do

WINT See you later, then (*He starts out and is just about to close the door when he thinks of something*) And say, I'll say you're a

Harvard freshman, and you back me up They don't know a damn thing about Harvard I don't want them thinking I'm travelling around with any high-school kid

RICHARD Sure That's easy

WINT So long, then You better beat it right after your dinner while you've got a chance, and hang around until it's time Watch your step, Kid

RICHARD So long (*The door closes behind WINT RICHARD stands for a moment, a look of bitter, defiant rebellion coming over his face, and mutters to himself*) I'll show her she can't treat me the way she's done! I'll show them all! (*Then the front door is heard slamming, and a moment later TOMMY rushes in from the back parlor*)

TOMMY Where's Ma?

RICHARD (*surlily*) In the sitting-room Where did you think, Bonehead?

TOMMY Pa and Uncle Sid are coming Mid and I saw them from the front piazza Gee, I'm glad I'm awful hungry, ain't you? (*He rushes out through the back parlor, calling*) Ma! They're coming! Let's have dinner quick! (*A moment later MRS MILLER appears from the back parlor accompanied by TOMMY, who keeps insisting urgently*) Gee, but I'm awful hungry, Ma!

MRS MILLER I know You always are You've got a tapeworm, that's what I think

TOMMY. Have we got lobsters, Ma? Gee, I love lobsters

MRS. MILLER. Yes, we've got lobsters. And fish. You remember what I told you about that fish (He snickers) Now, do be quiet, Tommy! (Then with a teasing smile at RICHARD) Well, I'm glad to see you've got back out of the night, Richard. (He scowls and turns his back on her. LILY appears through the back parlor, nervous and apprehensive. As she does so, from the front yard SID's voice is heard singing "Poor John!") MRS. MILLER shakes her head forebodingly—but, so great is the comic spell for her even in her brother's voice, a humorous smile hovers at the corners of her lips) Mimm! Mimm! Lily, I'm afraid—

LILY (bitterly) Yes, I might have known (MILDRED runs in through the back parlor. She is laughing to herself a bit shamefacedly. She rushes to her mother.)

MILDRED Ma, Uncle Sid's— (She whispers in her ear.)

MRS. MILLER Never mind! You shouldn't notice such things—at your age! And don't you encourage him by laughing at his foolishness, you hear!

TOMMY You needn't whisper, Mildred. Think I don't know? Uncle Sid's soused again.

MRS. MILLER (shakes him by the arm indignantly) You be quiet! Did I ever! You're getting too smart! (Gives him a push) Go to your place and sit right down and not another word out of you!

TOMMY (aggrieved—rubbing his arm as he goes to his place) Aw, Ma!

MRS. MILLER. And you sit down, Richard and Mildred. You better, too, Lily. We'll get him right in here and get some food in him. He'll be all right then. (RICHARD, preserving the pose of the bitter, disillusioned pessimist, sits down in his place in the chair at right of the two whose backs face front. MILDRED takes the other chair facing back, at his left. TOMMY has already slid into the end chair at right of those at the rear of table facing front. LILY sits in the one of those at left, by the head of the table, leaving the middle one (SID's) vacant. While they are doing this, the front screen door is heard slamming and NAT's and SID's laughing voices, raised as they come in and for a moment after, then suddenly cautiously lowered. MRS. MILLER goes to the entrance to the back parlor and calls peremptorily) You come right in here! Don't stop to wash up or anything. Dinner's coming right on the table.

MILLER'S VOICE (jovially) All right, Essie. Here we are! Here we are!

MRS. MILLER (goes to pantry door, opens it and calls) All right, Norah. You can bring in the soup. (She comes back to the back-parlor entrance just as MILLER enters. He isn't drunk by any means. He is just mellow and benignly ripened. His face is one large, smiling, happy beam of utter appreciation of life. All's right with the world, so satisfyingly right that he becomes sentimentally moved even to think of it.)

MILLER. Here we are, Essie! Right on the dot! Here we are! (He pulls her to him and gives her a smacking kiss on the ear as she jerks her head away. MILDRED and TOMMY giggle.)

RICHARD holds rigidly aloof and disdainful, his brooding gaze fixed on his plate LILY forces a smile)

MRS MILLER (pulling away—embarrassedly, almost blushing) Don't, you Crazy! (Then recovering herself—tartly) So I see, you're here! And if I didn't, you've told me four times already!

MILLER (beamingly) Now, Essie, don't be critical Don't be carpingly critical Good news can stand repeating, can't it? 'Course it can! (He slaps her jovially on her fat buttocks TOMMY and MILDRED roar with glee And NORAH, who has just entered from the pantry with a huge tureen of soup in her hands, almost drops it as she explodes in a merry guffaw)

MRS MILLER (scandalized) Nat! Aren't you ashamed!

MILLER Couldn't resist it! Just simply couldn't resist it! (NORAH, still standing with the soup tureen held out stiffly in front of her, again guffaws)

MRS MILLER (turns on her with outraged indignation) Norah! Bring that soup here this minute! (She stalks with stiff dignity toward her place at the foot of the table, right)

NORAH (guiltily) Yes, Mum (She brings the soup around the head of the table, passing MILLER)

MILLER (jovially) Why, hello, Norah!

MRS MILLER Nat! (She sits down stiffly at the foot of the table)

NORAH (rebuking him familiarly) Arrah now, don't be making me laugh and getting me into trouble!

MRS MILLER Norah!

NORAH (a bit resentfully) Yes, Mum Here I am (She sets the soup tureen down with a thud in front of MRS MILLER and passes around the other side, squeezing with difficulty between the china closet and the backs of chairs at the rear of the table)

MRS MILLER Tommy! Stop spinning your napkin ring! How often have I got to tell you? Mildred! Sit up straight in your chair! Do you want to grow up a humpback? Richard! Take your elbows off the table!

MILLER (coming to his place at the head of the table, rubbing his hands together genially) Well, well, well Well, well, well It's good to be home again

(NORAH exits into the pantry and lets the door slam with a bang behind her)

MRS MILLER (jumps) Oh! (Then exasperatedly) Nat, I do wish you wouldn't encourage that stupid girl by talking to her, when I'm doing my best to train—

MILLER (beamingly) All right, Essie Your word is law! (Then laughingly) We did have the darndest fun today! And Sid was the life of that picnic! You ought to have heard him! Honestly, he had that crowd just rolling on the ground and splitting their sides! He ought to be on the stage

MRS MILLER (as NORAH comes back with a dish of saltines—begins ladling soup into the stack of plates before her) He ought to be at this table eating something to sober him up, that's what he ought to be! (She

calls) Sid! You come right in here! (Then to NORAH, *handing her a soup plate*) Here, Norah (NORAH *begins passing soup*) Sit down, Nat, for goodness sakes Start eating, everybody Don't wait for me You know I've given up soup

MILLER (*sits down but bends forward to call to his wife in a confidential tone*) Essie—Sid's sort of embarrassed about coming—I mean I'm afraid he's a little bit—not too much, you understand—but he met such a lot of friends and—well, you know, don't be hard on him Fourth of July is like Christmas—comes but once a year Don't pretend to notice, eh? And don't you kids, you hear! And don't you, Lily He's scared of you

LILY (*with stiff meekness*) Very well, Nat

MILLER (*beaming again—calls*) All right, Sid The coast's clear (He begins to absorb his soup ravenously) Good soup, Essie! Good soup! (A moment later SID makes his entrance from the back parlor He is in a condition that can best be described as blurry His movements have a hazy uncertainty about them His shiny fat face is one broad, blurred, plucky, naughty-boy grin, his eyes have a blurred, wondering vagueness As he enters he makes a solemnly intense effort to appear casual and dead, cold sober He waves his hand aimlessly and speaks with a silly gravity)

SID. Good evening (They all answer "Good evening," their eyes on their plates He makes his way vaguely toward his place, continuing his grave effort at conversation) Beautiful evening I never remember

seeing—more beautiful sunset. (He bumps vaguely into LILY's chair as he attempts to pass behind her—immediately he is all grave politeness) Sorry—sorry, Lily—deeply sorry

LILY (*her eyes on her plate—stiffly*). It's all right

SID (*manages to get into his chair at last—mutters to himself*) What was I sayin'? Oh, sunsets But why butt in? Hasn't sun—perfect right to set? Mind y'r own business (He pauses thoughtfully, considering this—then looks around from face to face, fixing each with a vague, blurred, wondering look, as if some deep puzzle were confronting him Then suddenly he grins mistily and nods with satisfaction) And there you are! Am I right?

MILLER (*humoring him*) Right

SID Right! (He is silent, studying his soup plate, as if it were some strange enigma Finally he looks up and regards his sister and asks with wondering amazement) Soup?

MRS MILLER Of course, it's soup What did you think it was? And you hurry up and eat it

SID (*again regards his soup with astonishment*) Well! (Then suddenly) Well, all right then! Soup be it! (He picks up his spoon and begins to eat, but after two tries in which he finds it difficult to locate his mouth, he addresses the spoon plaintively) Spoon, is this any way to treat a pal? (Then suddenly comically angry, putting the spoon down with a bang) Down with spoons! (He raises his soup plate and declares) "We'll drink to the 'lead already' and nurah for the next who

dies." (*Bowing solemnly to right and left*) Your good health, ladies and gents (*He starts drinking the soup*) MILLER guffaws and MILDRED and TOMMY giggle Even RICHARD forgets his melancholy and snickers, and MRS MILLER conceals a smile Only LILY remains stiff and silent)

MRS MILLER (*with forced severity*) Sid!

SID (*peers at her muzzily, lowering the soup plate a little from his lips*) Eh?

MRS MILLER Oh, nothing Never mind

SID (*solemnly offended*) Are you—publicly rebuking me before assembled—? Isn't soup liquid? Aren't liquids drunk? (*Then considering this to himself*) What if they are drunk? It's a good man's failing (*He again peers mistily about at the company*) Am I right or wrong?

MRS MILLER Hurry up and finish your soup, and stop talking nonsense!

SID (*turning to her—again offended*) Oh, no, Essie, if I ever so fi forget myself as to drink a leg of lamb, then you might have some—excuse for— Just think of waste effort eating soup with spoons—fifty gruelling lifts per plate—billions of soup-eaters on globe—why, it's simply staggering! (*Then darkly to himself*) No more spoons for me! If I want to develop my biceps, I'll buy Sandow Exerciser! (*He drinks the rest of his soup in a gulp and beams around at the company, suddenly all happiness again*) Am I right, folks?

MILLER (*who has been choking with laughter*) Haw, haw! You're right, Sid.

SID (*peers at him blurredly and shakes his head sadly*) Poor old Nat! Always wrong—but heart of gold, heart of purest gold And drunk again, I regret to note Sister, my heart bleeds for you and your poor fatherless chicks!

MRS MILLER (*restraining a giggle—severely*) Sid! Do shut up for a minute! Pass me your soup plates, everybody If we wait for that girl to take them, we'll be here all night. (*They all pass their plates, which MRS MILLER stacks up and then puts on the sideboard*) As she is doing this, NORAH appears from the pantry with a platter of broiled fish She is just about to place these before MILLER when SID catches her eye mistily and rises to his feet, making her a deep, uncertain bow)

SID (*rapidly*) Ah, Sight for Sore Eyes, my beautiful Macushla, my star-eyed Mavourneen—

MRS MILLER Sid!

NORAH (*immensely pleased—gives him an arch, flirtatious glance*) Ah sure, Mister Sid, it's you that have kissed the Blarney Stone, when you've a drop taken!

MRS MILLER (*outraged*) Norah! Put down that fish!

NORAH (*flustered*) Yes, Mum (*She attempts to put the fish down hastily before MILLER, but her eyes are fixed nervously on MRS MILLER and she gives MILLER a nasty swipe on the side of the head with the edge of the dish*)

MILLER Ouch! (*The children, even RICHARD, explode into laughter.*)

NORAH (*almost lets the dish fall*)
Oh, glory be to God! Is it hurted
you are?

MILLER (*rubbing his head—good-naturedly*) No, no harm done. Only careful, Norah, careful

NORAH (*gratefully*) Yes, sorr (*She thumps down the dish in front of him with a sigh of relief*)

SID (*who is still standing—with drunken gravity*) Careful, Mavourneen, careful! You might have hit him some place besides the head. Always aim at his head, remember—so as not to worry us (*Again the children explode. Also NORAH. Even LILY suddenly lets out an hysterical giggle and is furious with herself for doing so*)

LILY I'm so sorry, Nat. I didn't mean to laugh (*Turning on SID furiously*) Will you please sit down and stop making a fool of yourself! (*SID gives her a hurt, mournful look and then sinks meekly down on his chair*)

NORAH (*grinning cheerfully, gives LILY a reassuring pat on the back*) Ah, Miss Lily, don't mind him. He's only under the influence. Sure, there's no harm in him at all.

MRS MILLER Norah! (*NORAH exits hastily into the pantry, letting the door slam with a crash behind her. There is silence for a moment as MILLER serves the fish and it is passed around. NORAH comes back with the vegetables and disappears again, and these are dished out.*)

MILLER (*is about to take his first bite—stops suddenly and asks his*

wife). This isn't, by any chance, bluefish, is it, my dear?

MRS MILLER (*with a warning glance at TOMMY*). Of course not. You know we never have bluefish, on account of you.

MILLER (*addressing the table now with the gravity of a man confessing his strange peculiarities*) Yes, I regret to say, there's a certain peculiar oil in bluefish that invariably poisons me (*At this, TOMMY cannot stand it any more but explodes into laughter. MRS MILLER, after a helpless glance at him, follows suit, then LILY goes off into uncontrollable, hysterical laughter, and RICHARD and MILDRED are caught in the contagion. MILLER looks around at them with a weak smile, his dignity now ruffled a bit*) Well, I must say I don't see what's so darned funny about my being poisoned.

SID (*peers around him—then with drunken cunning*) Aha! Nat, I suspect—plot! This fish looks blue to me—very blue—in fact despondent, desperate, and— (*He points his fork dramatically at MRS MILLER*) See how guilty she looks—a ver—veritable Lucretia Georgia! Can it be this woman has been slowly poisoning you all these years? And how well—you've stood it! What iron constitution! Even now, when you are invanably at death's door, I can't believe— (*Everyone goes off into uncontrollable laughter*)

MILLER (*grumpily*) Oh, give us a rest, you darned fool! A joke's a joke, but— (*He addresses his wife in a wounded tone*) Is this true, Essie?

MRS. MILLER (*wiping the tears from her eyes—defiantly*) Yes, it is true.

if you must know, and you'd never have suspected it, if it weren't for that darned Tommy, and Sid poking his nose in You've eaten bluefish for years and thrived on it and it's all nonsense about that peculiar oil

MILLER (*deeply offended*) Kindly allow me to know my own constitution! Now I think of it, I've felt upset afterwards every damned time we've had fish! (*He pushes his plate away from him with proud renunciation*) I can't eat this

MRS MILLER (*insultingly matter-of-fact*) Well, don't then There's lots of lobster coming and you can fill up on that
(*RICHARD suddenly bursts out laughing again*)

MILLER (*turns to him caustically*) You seem in a merry mood, Richard I thought you were the original of the Heart Bowed Down today

SID (*with mock condolence*) Never mind, Dick Let them—scoff! What can they understand about girls whose hair sizzchels, whose lips are fireworks, whose eyes are red-hot sparks—

MILDRED (*laughing*) Is that what he wrote to Muel? (*Turning to her brother*) You silly goat, you!

RICHARD (*surlily*) Aw, shut up, Mid What do I care about her? I'll show all of you how much I care!

MRS MILLER Pass your plates as soon as you're through, everybody I've rung for the lobster And that's all You don't get any dessert or tea after lobster, you know
(*NORAH appears bearing a platter of cold boiled lobsters which she sets before MILLER, and disappears*)

TOMMY Gee, I love lobster!
(*MILLER puts one on each plate, and they are passed around and everyone starts in pulling the cracked shells apart*)

MILLER (*feeling more cheerful after a couple of mouthfuls—determining to give the conversation another turn, says to his daughter*) Have a good time at the beach, Mildred?

MILDRED Oh, fine, Pa, thanks The water was wonderful and warm

MILLER Swim far?

MILDRED Yes, for me But that isn't so awful far

MILLER Well, you ought to be a good swimmer, if you take after me I used to be a regular water rat when I was a boy I'll have to go down to the beach with you one of these days—though I'd be rusty, not having been in in all these years (*The reminiscence look comes into his eyes of one about to embark on an oft-told tale of childhood adventure*) You know, speaking of swimming, I never go down to that beach but what it calls to mind the day I and Red Sisk went in swimming there and I saved his life
(*By this time the family are beginning to exchange amused, guilty glances They all know what is coming*)

SID (*with a sly, blurry wink around*) Ha! Now we—have it again!

MILLER (*turning on him*) Have what?

SID Nothing—go on with your swimming—don't mind me

MILLER (*glares at him—but immediately is overcome by the reminiscence*)

mood again) Red Sisk—his father kept a blacksmith shop where the Union Market is now—we kids called him Red because he had the darnedest reddest crop of hair—

SID (*as if he were talking to his plate*). Remarkable!—the curious imagination—of little children

MRS MILLER (*as she sees MILLER about to explode—interposes tactfully*) Sid! Eat your lobster and shut up! Go on, Nat

MILLER (*gives SID a withering look—then is off again*) Well, as I was saying, Red and I went swimming that day. Must have been—let me see—Red was fourteen, bigger and older than me, I was only twelve—forty-five years ago—wasn't a single house down there then—but there was a stake out where the whistling buoy is now, about a mile out (TOMMY, *who has been having difficulty restraining himself, lets out a stifled giggle* MILLER *bends a frowning gaze on him*) One more sound out of you, young man, and you'll leave this table!

MRS MILLER (*quickly interposing, trying to stave off the story*) Do eat your lobster, Nat. You didn't have any fish, you know

MILLER (*not liking the reminder—pettishly*) Well, if I'm going to be interrupted every second anyway—(He turns to his lobster and chews in silence for a moment)

MRS MILLER (*trying to switch the subject*) How's Anne's mother's rheumatism, Mildred?

MILDRED Oh, she's much better, Ma. She was in wading today. She

says salt water's the only thing that really helps her bunion

MRS MILLER Mildred! Where are your manners? At the table's no place to speak of—

MILLER (*fallen into the reminiscent, obsession again*) Well, as I was saying, there was I and Red, and he dared me to race him out to the stake and back. Well, I didn't let anyone dare me in those days. I was a spunky kid. So I said all right and we started out. We swam and swam and were pretty evenly matched, though, as I've said, he was bigger and older than me, but finally I drew ahead. I was going along easy, with lots in reserve, not a bit tired, when suddenly I heard a sort of gasp from behind me—like this—"help." (*He imitates* Everyone's eyes are firmly fixed on their plates, except Sid's) And I turned and there was Red, his face all pinched and white, and he says weakly "Help, Nat! I got a cramp in my leg!" Well, I don't mind telling you I got mighty scared. I didn't know what to do. Then suddenly I thought of the pile. If I could pull him to that, I could hang on to him till someone'd notice us. But the pile was still—well, I calculate it must have been two hundred feet away.

SID Two hundred and fifty!

MILLER (*in confusion*) What's that?

SID Two hundred and fifty! I've taken down the distance every time you've saved Red's life for thirty years and the mean average to that pile is two hundred and fifty feet! (There is a burst of laughter from around the table. SID continues complainingly) Why didn't you let that

Red down, anyway, Nat? I never knew him but I know I'd never have liked him

MILLER (*really hurt, forces a feeble smile to his lips and pretends to be a good sport about it*) Well, guess you're right, Sid. Guess I have told that one too many times and bored everyone. But it's a good true story for kids because it illustrates the danger of being foolhardy in the water—

MRS MILLER (*sensing the hurt in his tone, comes to his rescue*) Of course it's a good story—and you tell it whenever you've a mind to. And you, Sid, if you were in any responsible state, I'd give you a good piece of my mind for teasing Nat like that.

MILLER (*with a sad, self-pitying smile at his wife*) Getting old, I guess, Mother—getting to repeat myself. Someone ought to stop me.

MRS MILLER No such thing! You're as young as you ever were. (*She turns on him again angrily*) You eat your lobster and maybe it'll keep your mouth shut!

SID (*after a few chews—unrepentantly*) Lobster! Did you know, Tommy, your Uncle Sid is the man invented lobster? Fact! One day—when I was building the Pyramids—took a day off and just dashed off lobster. He was bigger'n' older than me and he had the damndest reddest crop of hair but I dashed him off just the same, Am I right, Nat? (*Then suddenly in the tones of a side-show barker*) Ladies and Gents—

MRS MILLER Mercy sakes! Can't you shut up?

SID. In this cage you see the lobster. You will not believe me, ladies and

gents, but it's a fact that this interesting bivalve only makes love to his mate once in every thousand years—but, dearie me, how he does enjoy it!

(*The children roar. LILY and MRS MILLER laugh in spite of themselves—then look embarrassed. MILLER guffaws—then suddenly grows shocked.*)

MILLER Careful, Sid, careful. Remember you're at home.

TOMMY (*suddenly in a hoarse whisper to his mother, with an awed glance of admiration at his uncle*) Ma! Look at him! He's eating that claw, shells and all!

MRS MILLER (*horrified*) Sid, do you want to kill yourself? Take it away from him, Lily!

SID (*with great dignity*) But I prefer the shells. All famous epicures prefer the shells—to the less delicate, coarser meat. It's the same with clams. Unless I eat the shells there is a certain, peculiar oil that invariably poisons—Am I right, Nat?

MILLER (*good-naturedly*) You seem to be getting a lot of fun kidding me. Go ahead, then. I don't mind.

MRS MILLER He better go right up to bed for a while, that's what he better do.

SID (*considering this owlshly*) Bed? Yes, maybe you're right. (*He gets to his feet*) I am not at all well—in very delicate condition—we are praying for a boy. Am I right, Nat? Nat, I kept telling you all day I was in delicate condition and yet you kept forcing demon chowder on me, although you knew full well—even if you were full—that there is a cer-

tain peculiar oil in chowder that invariably—*(They are again all laughing—LILY, hysterically)*

MRS MILLER Will you get to bed, you idiot!

SID *(muttering graciously)* Immediately—if not sooner *(He turns to pass behind LILY, then stops, staring down at her)* But wait! There is still a duty I must perform! No day is complete without it! Lily, answer once and for all, will you marry me?

LILY *(with an hysterical giggle)* No, I won't—never!

SID *(nodding his head)* Right! And perhaps it's all for the best! For how could I forget the pre—precepts taught me at mother's dying knee! "Sidney," she said, "never marry a woman who drinks! Lips that touch liquor shall never touch yours!" *(Gazing at her mournfully)* Too bad! So fine a woman once—and now such a slave to rum! *(Turning to NAT)* What can we do to save her, Nat? *(In a hoarse, confidential whisper)* Better put her in institution where she'll be removed from temptation! The mere smell of it seems to drive her frantic!

MRS MILLER *(struggling with her laughter)* You leave Lily alone, and go to bed!

SID Right! *(He comes around behind LILY's chair and moves toward the entrance to the back parlor—then suddenly turns and says with a bow)* Good night, ladies—and gents! We will meet—bye and bye! *(He gives an imitation of a Salvation Army drum)* Boom! Boom! Boom! Come and be saved, Brothers! *(He starts to sing the old Army hymn)*

"In the sweet
Bye and bye
We will meet on that beautiful
shore"

(He turns and marches solemnly out through the back parlor, singing)

"Work and pray
While you may
We will meet in the sky bye and
bye"

(MILLER and his wife and the children are all roaring with laughter, LILY giggles hysterically)

MILLER *(subsiding at last)* Haw, haw! He's a case, if ever there was one! Darned if you can help laughing at him—even when he's poking fun at you!

MRS MILLER Goodness, but he's a caution! Oh, my sides ache, I declare! I was trying so hard not to—but you can't help it, he's so silly! But I suppose we really shouldn't! It only encourages him! But, my lands—!

LILY *(suddenly gets up from her chair and stands rigidly, her face working—jerkily)* That's just it—you shouldn't—even I laughed—it does encourage—that's been his downfall—everyone always laughing, everyone always saying what a card he is, what a case, what a caution, so funny—and he's gone on—and we're all responsible—making it easy for him—we're all to blame—and all we do is laugh!

MILLER *(worriedly)* Now, Lily, now, you mustn't take on so! It isn't as serious as all that.

LILY *(bitterly)* Maybe—it is—to me! Or was—once *(Then contritely)* I'm

sorry, Nat I'm sorry, Essie I didn't mean to—I'm not feeling myself tonight If you'll excuse me, I'll go in the front parlor and lie down on the sofa awhile

MRS MILLER Of course, Lily You do whatever you've a mind to
(LILY goes out)

MILLER (*frowning—a little shame-faced*) Hmm I suppose she's right Never knew Lily to come out with things that way before Anything special happened, Essie?

MRS MILLER Nothing I know—except he'd promised to take her to the fireworks

MILLER That's so Well, supposing I take her I don't want her to feel disappointed

MRS MILLER (*shaking her head*) Wild horses couldn't drag her there now

MILLER Hmm I thought she'd got completely over her foolishness about him long ago

MRS MILLER She never will

MILLER She'd better He's got fired out of that Waterbury job—told me at the picnic after he'd got enough Dutch courage in him

MRS MILLER Oh, dear! Isn't he the fool!

MILLER I knew something was wrong when he came home Well, I'll find a place for him on my paper again, of course He always was the best news-getter this town ever had But I'll tell him he's got to stop his damn nonsense

MRS MILLER (*doubtfully*) Yes

MILLER Well, no use sitting here mourning over spilt milk (*He gets up, and* RICHARD, MILDRED, TOMMY and MRS MILLER follow his example, the children quiet and a bit awed) You kids go out in the yard and try to keep quiet for a while, so's your Uncle Sid'll get to sleep and your Aunt Lily can rest

TOMMY (*mournfully*) Ain't we going to set off the skyrockets and Roman candles, Pa?

MILLER Later, Son, later It isn't dark enough for them yet anyway

MILDRED Come on, Tommy I'll see he keeps quiet, Pa

MILLER That's a good girl (*MILDRED and TOMMY go out through the screen door* RICHARD remains standing, sunk in bitter, gloomy thoughts MILLER glances at him—then irritably) Well, Melancholy Dane, what are you doing?

RICHARD (*darkly*) I'm going out—for a while (*Then suddenly*) Do you know what I think? It's Aunt Lily's fault, Uncle Sid's going to ruin It's all because he loves her, and she keeps him dangling after her, and eggs him on and ruins his life—like all women love to ruin men's lives! I don't blame him for drinking himself to death! What does he care if he dies, after the way she's treated him! I'd do the same thing myself if I were in his boots!

MRS MILLER (*indignantly*) Richard! You stop that talk!

RICHARD (*quotes bitterly*)

"Drink! for you know not whence you come nor why

Drink! for you know not why you go nor where!"

MILLER (*losing his temper—harshly*) Listen here, young man! I've had about all I can stand of your nonsense for one day! You're growing a lot too big for your size, seems to me! You keep that damn fool talk to yourself, you hear me—or you're going to regret it! Mind now! (*He strides angrily away through the back parlor*)

MRS MILLER (*still indignant*) Richard, I'm ashamed of you, that's what I am (*She follows her husband. RICHARD stands for a second, bitter, humiliated, wronged, even his father turned enemy, his face growing more and more rebellious. Then he forces a scornful smile to his lips*)

RICHARD Aw, what the hell do I care? I'll show them! (*He turns and goes out the screen door*)

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

SCENE I

SCENE—*The back room of a bar in a small hotel—a small, dingy room, dimly lighted by two fly-specked globes in a fly-specked gilt chandelier suspended from the middle of the ceiling. At left, front, is the swinging door leading to the bar. At rear of door, against the wall, is a nickel-in-the-slot player-piano. In the rear wall, right, is a door leading to the "Family Entrance" and the stairway to the upstairs rooms. In the middle of the right wall is a window with closed shutters. Three tables with stained tops, four chairs around each table, are placed at center, front, at right, toward rear, and at rear, center. A brass cuspidor is on the floor by each table. The floor is unswept, littered with cigarette and cigar butts. The hideous saffron-colored wallpaper is blotched and spotted.*

It is about 10 o'clock the same night. RICHARD and BELLE are discovered sitting at the table at center, BELLE at left of it, RICHARD in the next chair at the middle of table, rear, facing front.

BELLE is twenty, a rather pretty peroxide blonde, a typical college "tart" of the period, and of the cheaper variety, dressed with tawdry flashiness. But she is a fairly recent recruit to the ranks, and is still a bit remorseful behind her make-up and defiantly careless manner.

BELLE has an empty gin-rickey glass before her, RICHARD a half-empty glass of beer. He looks horribly timid, embarrassed and guilty, but at the same time thrilled and proud of at last mingling with the pace that kills.

The player-piano is grinding out "Bedelia." The BARTENDER, a stocky young Irishman with a foxily cunning, stupid face and a cynically wise grin, stands just inside the bar entrance, watching them over the swinging door.

BELLE (*with an impatient glance at her escort—rattling the ice in her empty glass*) Drink up your beer, why don't you? It's getting flat

RICHARD (*embarrassedly*) I let it get that way on purpose. I like it better when it's flat (*But he hastily gulps down the rest of his glass, as if it were some nasty-tasting medicine*)
THE BARTENDER chuckles audibly
BELLE glances at him)

BELLE (*nodding at the player-piano scornfully*) Say, George, is "Bedelia" the latest to hit this huck burg? Well, it's only a couple of years old! You'll catch up in time! Why don't you get a new roll for that old box?

BARTENDER (*with a grin*) Complain to the boss, not me. We're not used to having Candy Kiddoes like you around—or maybe we'd get up to date

BELLE (*with a professionally arch grin at him*) Don't kid me, please. I can't bear it (*Then she sings to the music from the piano, her eyes now on RICHARD*) "Bedelia, I'd like to feel yer" (*The BARTENDER laughs. She smirks at RICHARD*) Ever hear those words to it, Kid?

RICHARD (*who has heard them but is shocked at hearing a girl say them—putting on a blasé air*) Sure, lots of times. That's old

BELLE (*edging her chair closer and putting a hand over one of his*) Then why don't you act as if you knew what they were all about?

RICHARD (*terribly flustered*) Sure, I've heard that old parody lots of times. What do you think I am?

BELLE. I don't know, Kid. Honest to God, you've got me guessing

BARTENDER (*with a mocking chuckle*) He's a hot sport, can't you tell it? I never seen such a spender. My head's dizzy bringing you 12 drinks!

BELLE (*laughs irritably—to RICHARD*) Don't let him kid you. You show him. Loosen up and buy another drink, what say?

RICHARD (*humiliated—manfully*) Sure. Excuse me. I was thinking of something else. Have anything you like (*He turns to the BARTENDER who has entered from the bar*) See what the lady will have—and have one on me yourself

BARTENDER (*coming to the table—with a wink at BELLE*) That's talking! Didn't I say you were a sport? I'll take a cigar on you (*To BELLE*) What's yours, Kiddo—the same?

BELLE. Yes. And forget the house rules this time and remember a rickey is supposed to have gin in it

BARTENDER (*grinning*) I'll try to—seeing it's you (*Then to RICHARD*) What's yours—another beer?

RICHARD (*shyly*) A small one, please. I'm not thirsty

BELLE (*calculatedly taunting*) Say, honest, are things that slow up at Harvard? If they had you down at New Haven, they'd put you in a kindergarten! Don't be such a dead one! Filling up on beer will only make you sleepy. Have a man's drink!

RICHARD (*shamefacedly*). All right. I was going to. Bring me a sloe-gin fizz

BELLE (to **BARTENDER**) And make it a real one

BARTENDER (with a wink) I get you Something that'll warm him up, eh? (He goes into the bar, chuckling.)

BELLE (looks around the room—irritably) Christ, what a dump! (**RICHARD** is startled and shocked by this curse and looks down at the table) If this isn't the deadeast burg I ever struck! Bet they take the sidewalks in after nine o'clock! (Then turning on him) Say, honestly, Kid, does your mother know you're out?

RICHARD (defensively) Aw, cut it out, why don't you—trying to kid me!

BELLE (glances at him—then resolves on a new tack—patting his hand) All right I didn't mean to, Deanie. Please don't get sore at me

RICHARD I'm not sore

BELLE (seductively) You see, it's this way with me I think you're one of the sweetest kids I've ever met—and I could like you such a lot if you'd give me half a chance—instead of acting so cold and indifferent

RICHARD I'm not cold and indifferent (Then solemnly tragic) It's only that I've got—a weight on my mind

BELLE (impatiently) Well, get it off your mind and give something else a chance to work (The **BARTENDER** comes in, bringing the drinks)

BARTENDER (setting them down—with a wink at **BELLE**) This'll warm

him for you Forty cents, that is—with the cigar

RICHARD (pulls out his roll and hands a dollar bill over—with exaggerated carelessness) Keep the change (**BELLE** emits a gasp and seems about to protest, then thinks better of it) The **BARTENDER** cannot believe his luck for a moment—then pockets the bill hastily, as if afraid **RICHARD** will change his mind)

BARTENDER (respect in his voice). Thank you, sir

RICHARD (grandly) Don't mention it

BARTENDER I hope you like the drink I took special pains with it (The voice of the **SALESMAN**, who has just come in the bar, calls "Hey! Anybody here?" and a coin is rapped on the bar) I'm coming. (The **BARTENDER** goes out)

BELLE (remonstrating gently, a new appreciation for her escort's possibilities in her voice) You shouldn't be so generous, Deanie Gets him in bad habits A dime would have been plenty

RICHARD Ah, that's all right I'm no tightwad

BELLE That's the talk I like to hear (With a quick look toward the bar, she stealthily pulls up her dress—to **RICHARD**'s shocked fascination—and takes a package of cheap cigarettes from her stocking) Keep an eye out for that bartender, Kid, and tell me if you see him coming Girls are only allowed to smoke upstairs in the rooms, he said

RICHARD (embarrassedly) All right. I'll watch.

BELLY (*having lighted her cigarette and inhaled deeply, holds the package out to him*) Have a Sweet? You smoke, don't you?

RICHARD (*taking one*) Sure! I've been smoking for the last two years—on the sly But next year I'll be allowed—that is, pipes and cigars (*He lights his cigarette with elaborate nonchalance, puffs, but does not inhale—then, watching her, with shocked concern*) Say, you oughtn't to inhale like that! Smoking's awful bad for girls, anyway, even if they don't—

BELLE (*cynically amused*) Afraid it will stunt my growth? Gee, Kid, you are a scream! You'll grow up to be a minister yet! (*RICHARD looks shamefaced She scans him impatiently—then holds up her drink*) Well, here's how! Bottoms up, now! Show me you really know how to drink It'll take that load off your mind (*RICHARD follows her example and they both drink the whole contents of their glasses before setting them down*) There! That's something like! Feel better?

RICHARD (*proud of himself—with a shy smile*) You bet

BELLE Well, you'll feel still better in a minute—and then maybe you won't be so distant and unfriendly, eh?

RICHARD I'm not

BELLE Yes, you are I think you just don't like me

RICHARD (*more manfully*) I do too like you

BELLE How much? A lot?

RICHARD Yes, a lot.

BELLE Show me how much! (*Then as he fidgets embarrassedly*) Want me to come sit on your lap?

RICHARD Yes—I— (*She comes and sits on his lap He looks desperately uncomfortable, but the gin is rising to his head and he feels proud of himself and devilish, too*)

BELLE Why don't you put your arm around me? (*He does so awkwardly*) No, not that dead way Hold me tight You needn't be afraid of hurting me I like to be held tight, don't you?

RICHARD Sure I do

BELLE 'Specially when it's by a nice handsome kid like you (*Ruffling his hair*) Gee, you've got pretty hair, do you know it? Honest, I'm awfully strong for you! Why can't you be about me? I'm not so awfully ugly, am I?

RICHARD No, you're—you're pretty

BELLE You don't say it as if you meant it

RICHARD I do mean it—honest

BELLE Then why don't you kiss me? (*She bends down her lips toward his He hesitates, then kisses her and at once shrinks back*) Call that kissing? Here (*She holds his head and fastens her lips on his and holds them there He starts and struggles She laughs*) What's the matter, Honey Boy? Haven't you ever kissed like that before?

RICHARD Sure Lots of times.

BELLE 'Then why did you jump as if I'd bitten you? (*Squirming around on his lap*) Gee, I'm getting just crazy about you! What shall we do about it, eh? Tell me

RICHARD I—don't know (*Then boldly*) I—I'm crazy about you, too

BELLE (*kissing him again*) Just think of the wonderful time Edith and your friend, Wint, are having upstairs—while we sit down here like two dead ones. A room only costs two dollars. And, seeing I like you so much, I'd only take five dollars—from you. I'd do it for nothing—for you—only I've got to live and I owe my room rent in New Haven—and you know how it is. I get ten dollars from everyone else. Honest! (*She kisses him again, then gets up from his lap—briskly*) Come on. Go out and tell the bartender you want a room. And hurry. Honest, I'm so strong for you I can hardly wait to get you upstairs!

RICHARD (*starts automatically for the door to the bar—then hesitates, a great struggle going on in his mind—timidity, disgust at the money element, shocked modesty, and the guilty thought of MURIEL, fighting it out with the growing tipsiness that makes him want to be a hell of a fellow and go in for all forbidden fruit, and makes this tart a romantic, evil vampire in his eyes. Finally, he stops and mutters in confusion*) I can't

BELLE What, are you too bashful to ask for a room? Let me do it, then (*She starts for the door*)

RICHARD (*desperately*) No—I don't want you to—I don't want to

BELLE (*surveying him, anger coming into her eyes*) Well, if you aren't the lousiest cheap skate!

RICHARD I'm not a cheap skate!

BELLE Keep me around here all night fooling with you when I might be out with some real live ones—if there is such a thing in this burg!—and now you quit on me! Don't be such a piker! You've got five dollars! I seen it when you paid for the drinks, so don't hand me any lies!

RICHARD I— Who said I hadn't? And I'm not a piker. If you need the five dollars so bad—for your room rent—you can have it without—I mean, I'll be glad to give— (*He has been fumbling in his pocket and pulls out his nine-dollar roll and holds out the five to her*)

BELLE (*hardly able to believe her eyes, almost snatches it from his hand—then laughs and immediately becomes sentimentally grateful*) Thanks, Kid. Gee—oh, thanks—Gee, forgive me for losing my temper and bawling you out, will you? Gee, you're a regular peach! You're the nicest kid I've ever met! (*She kisses him and he grins proudly, a hero to himself now on many counts*) Gee, you're a peach! Thanks, again!

RICHARD (*grandly—and quite tipsily*) It's—nothing—only too glad (*Then boldly*) Here—give me another kiss, and that'll pay me back

BELLE (*kissing him*) I'll give you a thousand, if you want 'em. Come on, let's sit down, and we'll have another drink—and this time I'll blow you just to show my appreciation (*She calls*) Hey, George! Bring us another round—the same!

RICHARD (*a remnant of caution coming to him*) I don't know as I ought to—

BELLE Oh, another won't hurt you And I want to blow you, see (*They sit down in their former places*)

RICHARD (*boldly draws his chair closer and puts an arm around her—tipsily*) I like you a lot—now I'm getting to know you. You're a darned nice girl

BELLE Nice is good! Tell me another! Well, if I'm so nice, why didn't you want to take me upstairs? That's what I don't get

RICHARD (*lying boldly*) I did want to—only I— (*Then he adds solemnly*) I've sworn off (*The BARTENDER enters with the drinks*)

BARTENDER (*setting them on the table*) Here's your pleasure (*Then regarding RICHARD's arm about her waist*) Ho-ho, we're coming on, I see (*RICHARD grins at him muzzily*)

BELLE (*digs into her stocking and gives him a dollar*) Here This is mine (*He gives her change and she tips him a dime, and he goes out*) She puts the five RICHARD had given her in her stocking and picks up her glass Here's how—and thanks again (*She sips*)

RICHARD (*boisterously*) Bottoms up! Bottoms up! (*He drinks all of his down and sighs with exaggerated satisfaction*) Gee, that's good stuff, all right (*Hugging her*) Give me another kiss, Belle

BELLE (*kisses him*) What did you mean a minute ago when you said you'd sworn off?

RICHARD (*solemnly*) I took an oath I'd be faithful

BELLE (*cynically*) T'ill death do us part, eh? Who's the girl?

RICHARD (*shortly*) Never mind.

BELLE (*bristling*) I'm not good enough to talk about her, I suppose?

RICHARD I didn't—mean that You're all right (*Then with tipsy gravity*) Only you oughtn't to lead this kind of life It isn't right—for a nice girl like you Why don't you reform?

BELLE (*sharply*) Nix on that line of talk! Can it, you hear! You can do a lot with me for five dollars—but you can't reform me, see Mind your own business, Kid, and don't butt in where you're not wanted!

RICHARD I—I didn't mean to hurt your feelings

BELLE I know you didn't mean You're only like a lot of people who mean well, to hear them tell it (*Changing the subject*) So you're faithful to your one love, eh? (*With an ugly sneer*) And how about her? Bet you she's out with a guy under some bush this minute, giving him all he wants Don't be a sucker, Kid! Even the little flies do it!

RICHARD (*starting up in his chair—angrily*) Don't you say that! Don't you dare!

BELLE (*unimpressed—with a cynical shrug of her shoulders*) All right Have it your own way and be a sucker! It cuts no ice with me

RICHARD You don't know her or—

BELLE And don't want to Shut up about her, can't you? (*She*

stares before her bitterly RICHARD subsides into scowling gloom He is becoming perceptibly more intoxicated with each moment now The BARTENDER and the SALESMAN appear just inside the swinging door The BARTENDER nods toward BELLE, giving the SALESMAN a wink The SALESMAN grins and comes into the room, carrying his highball in his hand He is a stout, jowly-faced man in the late thirties, dressed with cheap nattiness, with the professional breeziness and jocular, kid-'em-along manner of his kind BELLE looks up as he enters and he and she exchange a glance of complete recognition She knows his type by heart and he knows hers)

SALESMAN (passes by her to the table at right—grinning genially) Good evening

BELLE Good evening

SALESMAN (sitting down) Hope I'm not butting in on your party—but my dogs were giving out standing at that bar

BELLE All right with me (Giving RICHARD a rather contemptuous look) I've got no party on.

SALESMAN That sounds hopeful

RICHARD (suddenly recites sentimentally)

"But I wouldn't do such, 'cause
I loved her too much,
But I learned about women
from her "

(Turns to scowl at the SALESMAN—then to BELLE) Let's have 'nother drink!

BELLE. You've had enough
(RICHARD subsides, muttering to himself)

SALESMAN What is it—a chuld poet or a chuld actor?

BELLE Don't know Got me guessing

SALESMAN Well, if you could shake the cradle-robbing act, maybe we could do a little business

BELLE That's easy I just pull my freight (She shakes RICHARD by the arm) Listen, Kid Here's an old friend of mine, Mr Smith of New Haven, just come in I'm going over and sit at his table for a while, see And you better go home

RICHARD (blinking at her and scowling) I'm never going home! I'll show them!

BELLE Have it your own way—only let me up (She takes his arm from around her and goes to sit by the SALESMAN RICHARD stares after her offendedly)

RICHARD Go on What do I care what you do? (He recites scornfully) "For a woman's only a woman, but a good cigar's a smoke"

SALESMAN (as BELLE sits beside him) Well, what kind of beer will you have, Sister?

BELLE Mine's a gin rickey

SALESMAN You've got extravagant tastes, I'm sorry to see

RICHARD (begins to recite sepulchraly)

"Yet each man kills the thing
he loves,
By each let this be heard"

SALESMAN (*grinning*) Say, this is rich! (*He calls encouragement*) That's swell dope, young feller Give us some more

RICHARD (*ignoring him—goes on more rhetorically*)

"Some do it with a bitter look,
Some with a flattering word,
The coward does it with a kiss,
The brave man with a sword!"

(*He stares at BELLE gloomily and mutters tragically*) I did it with a kiss! I'm a coward

SALESMAN That's the old stuff, Kid You've got something on the ball, all right, all right! Give us another—right over the old pan, now!

BELLE (*with a laugh*) Get the hook!

RICHARD (*glowering at her—tragically*)

" 'Oho,' they cnded, 'the world is wide,
But fettered limbs go lame!
And once, or twice, to throw the dice
Is a gentlemanly game,
But he does not win who plays with Sin
In the secret House of Shame! "

BELLE (*angrily*) Aw, can it! Give us a rest from that bunk!

SALESMAN (*mockingly*) This gal of yours don't appreciate poetry She's a lowbrow But I'm the kid that eats it up My middle name is Kelly and Sheets! Give us some more of the

same! Do you know "The Lobster and the Wise Guy"? (*Turns to BELLE seriously*) No kidding, that's a peacherino I heard a guy recite it at Poli's Maybe this nut knows it Do you, Kid? (*But RICHARD only glowers at him gloomily without answering*)

BELLE (*surveying RICHARD contemptuously*) He's copped a fine skunkful—and gee, he's hardly had anything

RICHARD (*suddenly—with a dire emphasis*) "And then—at ten o'clock—Eilert Lovborg will come—with vine leaves in his hair!"

BELLE And bats in his belfry, if he's you!

RICHARD (*regards her bitterly—then starts to his feet bellicosely—to the SALESMAN*) I don't believe you ever knew her in New Haven at all! You just picked her up now! You leave her alone, you hear! You won't do anything to her—not while I'm here to protect her!

BELLE (*laughing*) Oh my God! Listen to it!

SALESMAN Ssshh! This is a scream! Wait! (*He addresses RICHARD in tones of exaggerated melodrama*) Curse you, Jack Dalton, if I won't unhand her, what then?

RICHARD (*threateningly*) I'll give you a good punch in the snoot, that's what! (*He moves toward their table*)

SALESMAN (*with mock terror—screams in falsetto*) Help! Help! (*The BARTENDER comes in irritably*)

BARTENDER Hey Cut out the noise What the hell's up with you?

RICHARD (*tipsily*) He's too—damn fresh!

SALESMAN (*with a wink*) He's going to murder me (*Then gets a bright idea for eliminating RICHARD—seriously to the BARTENDER*) It's none of my business, Brother, but if I were in your boots I'd give this young souse the gate. He's under age, any fool can see that.

BARTENDER (*guiltily*) He told me he was over eighteen.

SALESMAN Yes, and I tell you I'm the Pope—but you don't have to believe me. If you're not looking for trouble, I'd advise you to get him started for some other gin mill and let them do the lying, if anything comes up.

BARTENDER Hmm (*He turns to RICHARD angrily and gives him a push*) Come on, now. On your way! You'll start no trouble in here! Beat it now!

RICHARD I will not beat it!

BARTENDER Oho, won't you? (*He gives him another push that almost sends him sprawling*)

BELLE (*callously*) Give him the bum's rush! I'm sick of his bull! (*RICHARD turns furiously and tries to punch the BARTENDER*)

BARTENDER (*avoids the punch*) Oho, you would, would you? (*He grabs RICHARD by the back of the neck and the seat of the pants and marches him ignominiously toward the swinging door*)

RICHARD Leggo of me, you dirty coward!

BARTENDER Quiet now—or I'll pin a Mary Ann on your jaw that'll quiet you! (*He rushes him through the screen door and a moment later the outer doors are heard swinging back and forth*)

SALESMAN (*with a chuckle*) Hand it to me, Kid. How was that for a slick way of getting rid of him?

BELLE (*suddenly sentimental*) Pooz kid. I hope he makes home all right. I liked him—before he got soused.

SALESMAN Who is he?

BELLE The boy who's upstairs with my friend told me, but I didn't pay much attention. Name's Miller. His old man runs a paper in this one-horse burg, I think he said.

SALESMAN (*with a whistle*) Phew! He must be Nat Miller's kid, then.

BARTENDER (*coming back from the bar*) Well, he's on his way—with a good boot in the tail to help him!

SALESMAN (*with a malicious chuckle*) Yes? well, maybe that boot will cost you a job, Brother. Know Nat Miller who runs the *Globe*? That's his kid.

BARTENDER (*his face falling*) The hell he is! Who said so?

SALESMAN This baby doll (*Getting up*) Say, I'll go keep cases on him—see he gets on the trolley all right, anyway. Nat Miller's a good scout. (*He hurries out*)

BARTENDER (*viciously*) God damn the luck! If he ever finds out I served his kid, he'll run me out of town. (*He turns on BELLE furiously*) Why

didn't you put me wise, you lousy tramp, you!

the family-entrance door) Get the hell out of here—and no long waits!

BELLE Hey! I don't stand for that kind of talk—not from no hick beer-squinter like you, see!

BELLE (*opens the door and goes out—turns and calls back viciously*) I'll fix you for this, you thick Mick, if I have to go to jail for it (*She goes out and slams the door*)

BARTENDER (*furiously*) You don't, don't you! Who was it but you told me to hand him dynamite in that fizz? (*He gives her chair a push that almost throws her to the floor*) Beat it, you—and beat it quick—or I'll call Sullivan from the corner and have you run in for street-walking! (*He gives her a push that lands her against*

BARTENDER (*looks after her worriedly for a second—then shrugs his shoulders*) That's only her bull (*Then with a sigh as he returns to the bar*) Them lousy tramps is always getting this dump in Dutch!

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

SCENE II

SCENE—Same as Act One—Sitting-room of the MILLER home—about 11 o'clock the same night

MILLER is sitting in his favorite rocking-chair at left of table, front. He has discarded collar and tie, coat and shoes, and wears an old, worn, brown dressing-gown and disreputable-looking carpet slippers. He has his reading specs on and is running over items in a newspaper. But his mind is plainly preoccupied and worried, and he is not paying much attention to what he reads.

MRS. MILLER sits by the table at right, front. She also has on her specs. A sewing basket is on her lap and she is trying hard to keep her attention fixed on the doily she is doing. But, as in the case of her husband, but much more apparently, her mind is preoccupied, and she is obviously on tenterhooks of nervous uneasiness.

LILY is sitting in the armchair by the table at rear, facing right. She is pretending to read a novel, but her attention wanders, too, and her expression is sad, although now it has lost all its bitterness and become submissive and resigned again.

MILDRED sits at the desk at right, front, writing two words over and over again, stopping each time to survey the result critically, biting her tongue, intensely concentrated on her work.

TOMMY sits on the sofa at left, front. He has had a hard day and is ter-

ribly sleepy but will not acknowledge it His eyes blink shut on him, his head begins to nod, but he isn't giving up, and every time he senses any of the family glancing in his direction, he goads himself into a bright-eyed wakefulness

MILDRED (*finally surveys the two words she has been writing and is satisfied with them*) There (*She takes the paper over to her mother*) Look, Ma I've been practising a new way of writing my name Don't look at the others, only the last one Don't you think it's the real goods?

MRS MILLER (*pulled out of her pre-occupation*) Don't talk that horrible slang It's bad enough for boys, but for a young girl supposed to have manners—my goodness, when I was your age, if my mother'd ever heard me—

MILDRED Well, don't you think it's nice, then?

MRS MILLER (*sinks back into pre-occupation—scanning the paper—vaguely*) Yes, very nice, Mildred—very nice, indeed (*Hands the paper back mechanically*)

MILDRED (*is a little piqued, but smiles*) Absent-minded! I don't believe you even saw it (*She passes around the table to show her* AUNT LILY MILLER gives an uneasy glance at his wife and then, as if afraid of meeting her eye, looks quickly back at his paper again)

MRS MILLER (*staring before her—sighs worriedly*) Oh, I do wish Richard would come home!

MILLER There now, Essie He'll be in any minute now Don't you worry about him.

MRS MILLER But I do worry about him!

LILY (*surveying MILDRED's handiwork—smiling*) This is fine, Mildred Your penmanship is improving wonderfully But don't you think that maybe you've got a little too many flourishes?

MILDRED (*disappointedly*) But, Aunt Lily, that's just what I was practising hardest on

MRS MILLER (*with another sigh*) What time is it now, Nat?

MILLER (*adopting a joking tone*) I'm going to buy a clock for in here You have me reaching for my watch every couple of minutes (*He has pulled his watch out of his vest pocket—with forced carelessness*) Only a little past ten

MRS MILLER Why, you said it was that an hour ago! Nat Miller, you're telling me a fib, so's not to worry me You let me see that watch!

MILLER (*guiltily*) Well, it's quarter to eleven—but that's not so late—when you remember it's Fourth of July

MRS MILLER If you don't stop talking Fourth of July—! To hear you go on, you'd think that was an excuse for anything from murder to picking pockets!

MILDRED (*has brought her paper around to her father and now shoves it under his nose*) Look, Pa

MILLER (*seizes on this interruption with relief*) Let's see Hmm Seems to me you've been inventing a new signature every week lately What are you in training for—writing checks? You must be planning to catch a rich husband

MILDRED (*with an arch toss of her head*) No wedding bells for me! But how do you like it, Pa?

MILLER It's overpowering—no other word for it, overpowering! You could put it on the Declaration of Independence and not feel ashamed

MRS MILLER (*desolately, almost on the verge of tears*) It's all right for you to laugh and joke with Mildred! I'm the only one in this house seems to care—(*Her lips tremble*)

MILDRED (*a bit disgustedly*) Ah, Ma, Dick only sneaked off to the fireworks at the beach, you wait and see

MRS MILLER Those fireworks were over long ago If he had, he'd be home

LILY (*soothingly*) He probably couldn't get a seat, the trolleys are so jammed, and he had to walk home

MILLER (*seizing on this with relief*) Yes, I never thought of that, but I'll bet that's it

MILDRED Ah, don't let him worry you, Ma He just wants to show off he's heartbroken about that silly Muriel—and get everyone fussing over him and wondering if he hasn't drowned himself or something

MRS MILLER (*snappily*) You be quiet! The way you talk at times, I really believe you're that hard-

hearted you haven't got a heart in you! (*With an accusing glance at her husband*) One thing I know, you don't get that from me! (*He meets her eye and avoids it guiltily She sniffs and looks away from him around the room* TOMMY, who is nodding and blinking, is afraid her eye is on him He straightens alertly and speaks in a voice that, in spite of his effort, is dripping with drowsiness)

TOMMY Let me see what you wrote, Mid

MILDRED (*cruelly mocking*) You? You're so sleepy you couldn't see it!

TOMMY (*valiantly*) I am not sleepy!

MRS MILLER (*has fixed her eye on him*) My gracious, I was forgetting you were still up! You run up to bed this minute! It's hours past your bedtime!

TOMMY But it's the Fourth of July! Ain't it, Pa?

MRS MILLER (*gives her husband an accusing stare*) There! You see what you've done? You might know he'd copy your excuses! (*Then sharply to TOMMY*) You heard what I said, Young Man!

TOMMY Aw, Ma, can't I stay up a little longer?

MRS MILLER I said, no! You obey me and no more arguing about it!

TOMMY (*drags himself to his feet*) Aw! I should think I could stay up till Dick—

MILLER (*kindly but firmly*) You heard your ma say no more arguing

When she says git, you better git
(TOMMY accepts his fate resignedly
and starts around kissing them all
good night)

TOMMY (kissing her) Good night,
Aunt Lily

LILY Good night, dear Sleep well

TOMMY (pecking at MILDRED) Good
night, you

MILDRED Good night, you

TOMMY (kissing him) Good night,
Pa

MILLER Good night, Son Sleep
tight

TOMMY (kissing her) Good night,
Ma

MRS MILLER Good night Here! You
look feverish Let me feel of your
head No, you're all right Hurry
up, now And don't forget your
prayers
(TOMMY goes slowly to the doorway
—then turns suddenly the discovery
of another excuse lighting up his
face)

TOMMY Here's another thing, Ma
When I was up to the water closet
last—

MRS MILLER (sharply) When you
were where?

TOMMY The bathroom

MRS MILLER That's better

TOMMY Uncle Sid was snoring like
a fog horn—and he's right next to
my room How can I ever get to sleep
while he's—
(He is overcome by a
jaw-cracking yawn)

MRS MILLER I guess you'd get to
sleep all night if you were inside a
fog horn You run along now (TOM-
MY gives up, grins sleepily, and
moves off to bed As soon as he is off
her mind, all her former uneasiness
comes back on MRS MILLER tenfold
She sighs, moves restlessly, then
finally asks) What time is it now,
Nat?

MILLER Now, Essie, I just told you
a minute ago

MRS MILLER (resentfully) I don't
see how you can take it so calm! Here
it's midnight, you might say, and
our Richard still out, and we don't
even know where he is

MILDRED I hear someone on the
piazza Bet that's him now, Ma

MRS MILLER (her anxiety immedi-
ately turning to relieved anger) You
give him a good piece of your mind,
Nat, you hear me? You're too easy
with him, that's the whole trouble!
The idea of him daring to stay out
like this! (The front door is heard
being opened and shut, and someone
whistling "Waltz Me Around Again,
Willie")

MILDRED No, that isn't Dick It's
Art

MRS MILLER (her face falling) Oh
(A moment later ARTHUR enters
through the front parlor, whistling
softly, half under his breath, looking
complacently pleased with himself)

MILLER (surveys him over his
glasses, not with enthusiasm—
shortly) So you're back, eh? We
thought it was Richard

ARTHUR Is he still out? Where'd he
go to?

MILLER. That's just what we'd like to know. You didn't run into him anywhere, did you?

ARTHUR. No. I've been at the Rands' ever since dinner. *(He sits down in the armchair at left of table, rear)* I suppose he sneaked off to the beach to watch the fireworks.

MILLER *(pretending an assurance he is far from feeling)*. Of course. That's what we've been trying to tell your mother, but she insists on worrying her head off.

MRS. MILLER. But if he was going to the fireworks, why wouldn't he say so? He knew we'd let him.

ARTHUR *(with calm wisdom)*. That's easy, Ma. *(He grins superiorly)*. Didn't you hear him this morning showing off bawling out the Fourth like an anarchist? He wouldn't want to renege on that to you—but he'd want to see the old fireworks just the same. *(He adds complacently)*. I know. He's at the foolish age.

MILLER *(stares at ARTHUR with ill-concealed astonishment, then grins)*. Well, Arthur, by gosh, you make me feel as if I owed you an apology when you talk horse sense like that. *(He turns to his wife, greatly relieved)*. Arthur's hit the nail right on the head, I think, Essie. That was what I couldn't figure out—why he—but now it's clear as day.

MRS. MILLER *(with a sigh)*. Well, I hope you're right. But I wish he was home.

ARTHUR *(takes out his pipe and fills and lights it with solemn gravity)*. He oughtn't to be allowed out this late at his age. I wasn't, Fourth or no Fourth—if I remember.

MILLER *(a twinkle in his eyes)*. Don't tax your memory trying to recall those ancient days of your youth. *(MILDRED laughs and ARTHUR looks sheepish. But he soon regains his aplomb.)*

ARTHUR *(importantly)*. We had a corking dinner at the Rands'. We had sweetbreads on toast.

MRS. MILLER *(arising momentarily from her depression)*. Just like the Rands to put on airs before you! I never could see anything to sweetbreads. Always taste like soap to me. And no real nourishment to them. I wouldn't have the pesky things on my table! *(ARTHUR again feels sat upon.)*

MILDRED *(teasingly)*. Did you kiss Elsie good night?

ARTHUR. Stop trying to be so darn funny all the time! You give me a pain in the ear!

MILDRED. And that's where she gives me a pain, the stuck-up thing!—thinks she's the whole cheese!

MILLER *(irritably)*. And it's where your everlasting wrangling gives me a pain, you two! Give us a rest! *(There is silence for a moment.)*

MRS. MILLER *(sighs worriedly again)*. I do wish that boy would get home!

MILLER *(glances at her uneasily, peeks surreptitiously at his watch—then has an inspiration and turns to ARTHUR)*. Arthur, what's this I hear about your having such a good singing voice? Rand was telling me he liked nothing better than to hear you sing—said you did every night you

were up there Why don't you ever give us folks at home here a treat?

ARTHUR (*pleased, but still nursing wounded dignity*) I thought you'd only sit on me

MRS MILLER (*perking up—proudly*) Arthur has a real nice voice He practises when you're not at home I didn't know you cared for singing, Nat

MILLER Well, I do—nothing better—and when I was a boy I had a fine voice myself and folks used to say I'd ought—(*Then abruptly, mindful of his painful experience with reminiscence at dinner, looking about him guiltily*) Hmm But don't hide your light under a bushel, Arthur Why not give us a song or two now? You can play for him, can't you, Mildred?

MILDRED (*with a toss of her head*) I can play as well as Elsie Rand, at least!

ARTHUR (*ignoring her—clearing his throat importantly*) I've been singing a lot tonight I don't know if my voice—

MILDRED (*forgetting her grudge, grabs her brother's hand and tugs at it*) Come on Don't play modest You know you're just dying to show off (*This puts ARTHUR off it at once He snatches his hand away from her angrily*)

ARTHUR Let go of me, you! (*Then with surly dignity*) I don't feel like singing tonight, Pa I will some other time

MILLER You let him alone, Mildred! (*He winks at ARTHUR, indicating*

with his eyes and a nod of his head MRS MILLER, who has again sunk into worried brooding He makes it plain by this pantomime that he wants him to sing to distract his mother's mind)

ARTHUR (*puts aside his pipe and gets up promptly*) Oh—sure, I'll do the best I can (*He follows MILDRED into the front parlor, where he switches on the lights*)

MILLER (*to his wife*) It won't keep Tommy awake Nothing could And Sid, he'd sleep through an earthquake (*Then suddenly, looking through the front parlor—grumpily*) Darn it, speak of the devil, here he comes Well, he's had a good sleep and he'd ought to be sobered up (*LILY gets up from her chair and looks around her huntedly, as if for a place to hide MILLER says soothingly*) Lily, you just sit down and read your book and don't pay any attention to him (*She sits down again and bends over her book tensely* From the front parlor comes the tinkling of a piano as MILDRED runs over the scales In the midst of this SID enters through the front parlor All the effervescence of his jag has worn off and he is now suffering from a bad case of hangover—nervous, sick, a prey to gloomy remorse and bitter feelings of self-loathing and self-pity His eyes are bloodshot and puffed, his face bloated, the fringe of hair around his baldness roused and tufty He sidles into the room guiltily, his eyes shifting about avoiding looking at anyone)

SID (*forcing a sickly, twitching smile*) Hello

MILLER (*considerately casual*) Hello, Sid Had a good nap? (*Then,*

as SID swallows hard and is about to break into further speech, MILDRED'S voice comes from the front parlor, "I haven't played that in ever so long, but I'll try," and she starts an accompaniment MILLER motions SID to be quiet) Ssssh! Arthur's going to sing for us (SID flattens himself against the edge of the bookcase at center, rear, miserably self-conscious and ill-at-ease there but nervously afraid to move anywhere else ARTHUR begins to sing He has a fairly decent voice but his method is untrained sentimentality to a dripping degree He sings that old sentimental favorite, "Then You'll Remember Me" The effect on his audience is instant MILLER gazes before him with a ruminating melancholy, his face seeming to become gently sorrowful and old MRS MILLER stares before her, her expression becoming more and more doleful LILY forgets to pretend to read her book but looks over it, her face growing tragically sad As for SID, he is moved to his remorseful, guilt-stricken depths His mouth pulls down at the corners and he seems about to cry The song comes to an end MILLER starts, then claps his hands enthusiastically and calls) Well done, Arthur—well done! Why, you've got a splendid voice! Give us some more! You liked that, didn't you, Essie?

MRS MILLER (dolefully) Yes—but it's sad—terrible sad

SID (after swallowing hard, suddenly blurts out) Nat and Essie—and Lily—I—I want to apologize—for coming home—the way I did—there's no excuse—but I didn't mean—

MILLER (sympathetically) Of course, Sid It's all forgotten

MRS MILLER (rousing herself—affectionately pitying) Don't be a goose, Sid We know how it is with picnics You forget it

(His face lights up a bit but his gaze shifts to LILY with a mute appeal, hoping for a word from her which is not forthcoming Her eyes are fixed on her book, her body tense and rigid)

SID (finally blurts out desperately) Lily—I'm sorry—about the fireworks Can you—forgive me? (But LILY remains implacably silent A stricken look comes over SID's face In the front parlor MILDRED is heard saying "But I only know the chorus"—and she starts another accompaniment)

MILLER (comes to SID's rescue) Ssssh! we're going to have another song Sit down, Sid (SID, hanging his head, flees to the farthest corner, left, front, and sits at the end of the sofa, facing front, hunched up, elbows on knees, face in hands, his round eyes childishly wounded and woebegone ARTHUR sings the popular "Dearie," playing up its sentimental values for all he is worth The effect on his audience is that of the previous song, intensified—especially upon SID As he finishes, MILLER again starts and applauds) Mighty fine, Arthur! You sang that darned well! Didn't he, Essie?

MRS MILLER (dolefully) Yes—but I wish he wouldn't sing such sad songs (Then, her lips trembling) Richard's always whistling that

MILLER (hastily—calls) Give us something cheery, next one, Arthur You know, just for variety's sake

SID (suddenly turns toward LILY—his voice choked with tears—in a pas-

sion of self-denunciation) You're right, Lily!—right not to forgive me!—I'm no good and never will be!—I'm a no-good drunken bum!—you shouldn't even wipe your feet on me!—I'm a dirty, rotten drunk!—no good to myself or anybody else!—if I had any guts I'd kill myself, and good riddance!—but I haven't!—I'm yellow, too!—a yellow, drunken bum! (He hides his face in his hands and begins to sob like a sick little boy This is too much for LILY All her bitter hurt and steely resolve to ignore and punish him vanish in a flash, swamped by a pitying love for him She runs and puts her arm around him—even kisses him tenderly and impulsively on his bald head, and soothes him as if he were a little boy MRS MILLER, almost equally moved, has half risen to go to her brother, too, but MILLER winks and shakes his head vigorously and motions her to sit down)

LILY There! Don't cry, Sid! I can't bear it! Of course, I forgive you! Haven't I always forgiven you? I know you're not to blame— So don't, Sid!

SID (lifts a tearful, humbly grateful, pathetic face to her—but a face that the dawn of a cleansed conscience is already beginning to restore to its natural Puckish expression) Do you really forgive me—I know I don't deserve it—can you really—?

LILY (gently) I told you I did, Sid—and I do

SID (kisses her hand humbly, like a big puppy licking it) Thanks, Lily I can't tell you— (In the front parlor, ARTHUR begins to sing rollickingly "Waiting at the Church," and after the first line or two MILDRED

joins in. SID's face lights up with appreciation and, automatically, he begins to tap one foot in time, still holding fast to LILY's hand When they come to "sent around a note, this is what she wrote," he can no longer resist, but joins in a shaky bawl) "Can't get away to marry you today, My wife won't let me!" (As the song finishes, the two in the other room laugh MILLER and SID laugh LILY smiles at SID's laughter Only MRS MILLER remains dolefully pre-occupied, as if she hadn't heard)

MILLER That's fine, Arthur and Mildred That's darned good

SID (turning to LILY enthusiastically) You ought to hear Vesta Victoria sing that! Gosh, she's great! I heard her at Hammerstein's Victoria—you remember, that trip I made to New York

LILY (her face suddenly tired and sad again—for her memory of certain aspects of that trip is the opposite from what he would like her to recall at this moment—gently disengaging her hand from his—with a hopeless sigh) Yes, I remember, Sid (He is overcome momentarily by guilty confusion She goes quietly and sits down in her chair again In the front parlor, from now on, MILDRED keeps starting to run over popular tunes but always gets stuck and turns to another)

MRS MILLER (suddenly) What time is it now, Nat? (Then without giving him a chance to answer) Oh, I'm getting worried something dreadful, Nat! You don't know what might have happened to Richard! You read in the papers every day about boys getting run over by automobiles

LILY Oh, don't say that, Essie!

MILLER (*sharply, to conceal his own reawakened apprehension*) Don't get to imagining things, now!

MRS MILLER Well, why couldn't it happen, with everyone that owns one out tonight, and lots of those driving, drunk? Or he might have gone down to the beach dock and fallen overboard! (*On the verge of hysteria*) Oh, I know something dreadful's happened! And you can sit there listening to songs and laughing as if— Why don't you do something? Why don't you go out and find him? (*She bursts into tears*)

LILY (*comes to her quickly and puts her arm around her*) Essie, you mustn't worry so! You'll make yourself sick! Richard's all right I've got a feeling in my bones he's all right

MILDRED (*comes hurrying in from the front parlor*) What's the trouble? (*ARTHUR appears in the doorway beside her She goes to her mother and also puts an arm around her*) Ah, don't cry, Ma! Dick'll turn up in a minute or two, wait and see!

ARTHUR Sure, he will!

MILLER (*has gotten to his feet, frowning—soberly*) I was going out to look—if he wasn't back by twelve sharp That'd be the time it'd take him to walk from the beach if he left after the last car But I'll go now, if it'll ease your mind I'll take the auto and drive out the beach road—and likely pick him up on the way (*He has taken his collar and tie from where they hang from one corner of the bookcase at rear, center, and is starting to put them on*) You better come with me, Arthur

ARTHUR Sure thing, Pa (*Suddenly he listens and says*) Ssssh! There's someone on the piazza now—coming around to this door, too That must be him No one else would—

MRS MILLER Oh, thank God, thank God!

MILLER (*with a sheepish smile*) Darn him! I've a notion to give him hell for worrying us all like this (*The screen door is pushed violently open and RICHARD lurches in and stands swaying a little, blinking his eyes in the light His face is a pasty pallor, shining with perspiration, and his eyes are glassy The knees of his trousers are dirty, one of them torn from the sprawl on the sidewalk he had taken, following the BARTENDER's kick They all gape at him, too paralyzed for a moment to say anything*)

MRS MILLER Oh God, what's happened to him! He's gone crazy! Richard!

SID (*the first to regain presence of mind—with a grin*) Crazy, nothing He's only soused!

ARTHUR He's drunk, that's what! (*Then shocked and condemning*) You've got your nerve! You fresh kid! We'll take that out of you when we get you down to Yale!

RICHARD (*with a wild gesture of defiance—maudlinly dramatic*)

"Yesterday this Day's Madness did prepare
Tomorrow's Silence, Triumph, or
Despair
Drink! for—"

MILLER (*his face grown stern and angry, takes a threatening step toward him*) Richard! How dare—!

MRS MILLER (*hysterically*) Don't you stinke him, Nat! Don't you—!

SID (*grabbing his arm*) Steady, Nat! Keep your temper! No good bawling him out now! He don't know what he's doing!

MILLER (*controlling himself and looking a bit ashamed*) All right—you're right, Sid

RICHARD (*drunkenly glorying in the sensation he is creating—recites with dramatic emphasis*) "And then—I will come—with vine leaves in my hair!" (*He laughs with a double-dyed sardonicism*)

MRS MILLER (*staring at him as if she couldn't believe her eyes*) Richard! You're intoxicated!—you bad, wicked boy, you!

RICHARD (*forces a wicked leer to his lips and quotes with ponderous mockery*) "Fancy that, Hedda!" (*Then suddenly his whole expression changes, his pallor takes on a greenish, seasick tinge, his eyes seem to be turned inward uneasily—and, all pose gone, he calls to his mother appealingly, like a sick little boy*) Ma!

I feel—rotten! (*MRS MILLER gives a cry and starts to go to him, but SID steps in her way*)

SID You let me take care of him, Essie I know this game backwards.

MILLER (*putting his arm around his wife*) Yes, you leave him to Sid

SID (*his arm around RICHARD—leading him off through the front parlor*) Come on, Old Sport! Upstairs we go! Your old Uncle Sid'll fix you up He's the kid that wrote the book!

MRS MILLER (*staring after them—still aghast*) Oh, it's too terrible! Imagine our Richard! And did you hear him talking about some Hedda? Oh, I know he's been with one of those bad women, I know he has—my Richard! (*She hides her face on MILLER's shoulder and sobs heart-brokenly*)

MILLER (*a tired, harassed, deeply worried look on his face—soothing her*) Now, now, you mustn't get to imagining such things! You mustn't, Essie! (*LILY and MILDRED and ARTHUR are standing about awkwardly with awed, shocked faces*)

CURTAIN

ACT FOUR

SCENE 1

SCENE—The same—Sitting-room of the MILLER house—about 1 o'clock in the afternoon of the following day

As the curtain rises, the family, with the exception of RICHARD, are discovered coming in through the back parlor from dinner in the dining-room.

MILLER and his wife come first. His face is set in an expression of frowning severity. MRS MILLER's face is drawn and worried. She has evidently had no rest yet from a sleepless, tearful night. SID is himself again, his expression as innocent as if nothing had occurred the previous day that remotely concerned him. And, outside of eyes that are bloodshot and nerves that are shaky, he shows no aftereffects except that he is terribly sleepy. LILY is gently sad and depressed. ARTHUR is self-consciously a virtuous young man against whom nothing can be said. MILDRED and TOMMY are subdued, covertly watching their father.

They file into the sitting-room in silence and then stand around uncertainly, as if each were afraid to be the first to sit down. The atmosphere is as stiltedly grave as if they were attending a funeral service. Their eyes keep fixed on the head of the house, who has gone to the window at right angles, is staring out frowningly, savagely chewing a toothpick.

MILLER (finally—irritably) Damn it, I'd ought to be back at the office putting in some goodicks! I've a whole pile of things that have got to be done today!

MRS MILLER (accusingly) You don't mean to tell me you're going back without seeing him? It's your duty—!

MILLER (exasperatedly) 'Course I'm not! I wish you'd stop jumping to conclusions! What else did I come home for, I'd like to know? Do I usually come way back here for dinner on a busy day? I was only wishing this hadn't come up—just at this particular time. (He ends up very lamely and is irritably conscious of the fact.)

TOMMY (who has been fidgeting restlessly—unable to bear the suspense a moment longer) What is it Dick's done? Why is everyone scared to tell me?

MILLER (seizes this as an escape valve—turns and fixes his youngest son with a stern forbidding eye) Young man, I've never spanked you yet, but that don't mean I never will!

Seems to me that you've been just itching for it lately! You keep your mouth shut till you're spoken to—or I warn you something's going to happen!

MRS MILLER Yes, Tommy, you keep still and don't bother your pa. (Then warningly to her husband) Careful what you say, Nat. Little pitchers have big ears.

MILLER (peremptorily) You kids skedaddle—all of you. Why are you always hanging around the house? Go out and play in the yard, or take a walk, and get some fresh air. (MILDRED takes TOMMY's hand and leads him out through the front parlor. ARTHUR hangs back as if the designation "kids" couldn't possibly apply to him. His father notices this—impatiently) You, too, Arthur. (ARTHUR goes out with a stiff, wounded dignity.)

LILY (tactfully) I think I'll go for a walk, too. (She goes out through the front parlor. SID makes a movement as if to follow her.)

MILLER I'd like you to stay, Sid—for a while, anyway.

SID Sure (He sits down in the rocking chair at right, rear, of table and immediately yawns) Gosh, I'm dead Don't know what's the matter with me today Can't seem to keep awake

MILLER (with caustic sarcasm) May be that demon chowder you drank at the picnic poisoned you! (SID looks sheepish and forces a grin Then MILLER turns to his wife with the air of one who determinedly faces the unpleasant) Where is Richard?

MRS MILLER (flusteredly) He's still in bed I made him stay in bed to punish him—and I thought he ought to, anyway, after being so sick But he says he feels all right

SID (with another yawn) 'Course he does When you're young you can stand anything without it feazing you Why, I remember when I could come down on the morning after, fresh as a daisy, and eat a breakfast of pork chops and fried onions and— (He stops guiltily)

MILLER (bitingly) I suppose that was before eating lobster shells had ruined your iron constitution!

MRS MILLER (regards her brother severely) If I was in your shoes, I'd keep still! (Then turning to her husband) Richard must be feeling better He ate all the dinner I sent up, Norah says

MILLER. I thought you weren't going to give him any dinner—to punish him

MRS MILLER (guiltily) Well—in his weakened condition—I thought it best— (Then defensively) But you needn't think I haven't punished him I've given him pieces of my

mind he won't forget in a hurry And I've kept reminding him his real punishment was still to come—that you were coming home to dinner on purpose—and then he'd learn that you could be terrible stern when he did such awful things

MILLER (stirs uncomfortably) Hmm!

MRS MILLER And that's just what it's your duty to do—punish him good and hard! The idea of him daring— (Then hastily) But you be careful how you go about it, Nat Remember he's like you inside—too sensitive for his own good And he never would have done it, I know, if it hadn't been for that darned little dunce, Muriel, and her numbskull father—and then all of us teasing him and hurting his feelings all day—and then you lost your temper and were so sharp with him right after dinner before he went out

MILLER (resentfully) I see this is going to work round to where it's all my fault!

MRS MILLER Now, I didn't say that, did I? Don't go losing your temper again And here's another thing You know as well as I, Richard would never have done such a thing alone Why, he wouldn't know how! He must have been influenced and led by someone

MILLER Yes, I believe that Did you worm out of him who it was? (Then angrily) By God, I'll make whoever it was regret it!

MRS MILLER No, he wouldn't admit there was anyone (Then triumphantly) But there is one thing I did worm out of him—and I can tell you it relieved my mind more'n any-

thing You know, I was afraid he'd been with one of those bad women Well, turns out there wasn't any Hedda She was just out of those books he's been reading He swears he's never known a Hedda in his life And I believe him Why, he seemed disgusted with me for having such a notion (*Then lamely*) So somehow—I can't kind of feel it's all as bad as I thought it was (*Then quickly and indignantly*) But it's bad enough, goodness knows—and you punish him good just the same The idea of a boy of his age—! Shall I go up now and tell him to get dressed, you want to see him?

MILLER (*helplessly—and irritably*) Yes! I can't waste all day listening to you!

MRS MILLER (*worriedly*) Now you keep your temper, Nat, remember! (*She goes out through the front parlor*)

MILLER Dam women, anyway! They always get you mixed up Their minds simply don't know what logic is! (*Then he notices that* SID *is dozing—sharply*) Sid!

SID (*blinking—mechanically*) I'll take the same (*Then hurriedly*) What'd you say, Nat?

MILLER (*caustically*) What I didn't say was what'll you have (*Irritably*) Do you want to be of some help, or don't you? Then keep awake and try and use your brains! This is a damned sight more serious than Essie has any idea! She thinks there weren't any girls mixed up with Richard's spree last night—but I happen to know there were! (*He takes a letter from his pocket*) Here's a note a woman left with one of the boys

downstairs at the office this morning—didn't ask to see me, just said give me this He'd never seen her before—said she looked like a tart (*He has opened the letter and reads*) "Your son got the booze he drank last night at the Pleasant Beach House The bartender there knew he was under age but served him just the same He thought it was a good joke to get him soused If you have any guts you will run that bastard out of town" Well, what do you think of that? It's a woman's handwriting—not signed, of course

SID She's one of the babies, all right—judging from her elegant language

MILLER Sec if you recognize the handwriting

SID (*with a reproachful look*) Nat, I resent the implication that I correspond with all the tramps around this town (*Looking at the letter*) No, I don't know who this one could be (*Handing the letter back*) But I deduce that the lady had a run-in with the barkeep and wants revenge

MILLER (*grimly*) And I deduce that before that she must have picked up Richard—or how would she know who he was?—and took him to this dive

SID Maybe The Pleasant Beach House is nothing but a bed house—(*Quickly*) At least, so I've been told

MILLER That's just the sort of damned fool thing he might do to spite Muriel, in the state of mind he was in—pick up some tart And she'd try to get him drunk so—

SID Yes, it might have happened like that—and it might not How're we

ever going to prove it? Everyone at the Pleasant Beach will lie their heads off

MILLER (*simply and proudly*) Richard won't lie

SID Well, don't blame him if he don't remember everything that happened last night (*Then sincerely concerned*) I hope you're wrong, Nat That kind of baby is dangerous for a kid like Dick—in more ways than one You know what I mean

MILLER (*frowningly*) Yep—and that's just what's got me worried Damn it, I've got to have a straight talk with him—about women and all those things I ought to have long ago

SID Yes You ought

MILLER I've tried to a couple of times I did it all right with Wilbur and Lawrence and Arthur when it came time—but, hell, with Richard I always get sort of ashamed of myself and can't get started right You feel, in spite of all his bold talk out of books, that he's so darned innocent inside

SID I know I wouldn't like the job (*Then after a pause—curiously*) How were you figuring to punish him for his sins?

MILLER (*frowning*) To be honest with you, Sid, I'm damned if I know All depends on what I feel about what he feels when I first size him up—and then it'll be like shooting in the dark

SID If I didn't know you so well, I'd say don't be too hard on him (*He smiles a little bitterly*) If you remem-

ber, I was always getting punished—and see what a lot of good it did me!

MILLER (*kindly*) Oh, there's lots worse than you around, so don't take to boasting (*Then, at a sound from the front parlor—with a sigh*) Well, here comes the Bad Man, I guess

SID (*getting up*) I'll beat it (*But it is MRS MILLER who appears in the doorway, looking guilty and defensive* SID sits down again)

MRS MILLER I'm sorry, Nat—but he was sound asleep and I didn't have the heart to wake him I waited for him to wake up but he didn't

MILLER (*concealing a relief of which he is ashamed—exasperatedly*) Well, I'll be double damned! If you're not there—

MRS MILLER (*defensively aggressive*) Now don't lose your temper at me, Nat Miller! You know as well as I do he needs all the sleep he can get today—after last night's ructions! Do you want him to be taken down sick? And what difference does it make to you, anyway? You can see him when you come home for supper, can't you? My goodness, I never saw you so savage-tempered! You'd think you couldn't bear waiting to punish him!

MILLER (*outraged*) Well, I'll be eternally— (*Then suddenly he laughs*) No use talking, you certainly take the cake! But you know darned well I told you I'm not coming home to supper tonight I've got a date with Jack Lawson that may mean a lot of new advertising and it's important

MRS MILLER Then you can see him when you do come home

MILLER (*covering his evident relief at this respite with a fuming manner*) All right! All right! I give up! I'm going back to the office (*He starts for the front parlor*) Bring a man all the way back here on a busy day and then you— No consideration— (*He disappears, and a moment later the front door is heard shutting behind him*)

MRS MILLER Well! I never saw Nat so bad-tempered

SID (*with a chuckle*) Bad temper, nothing He's so tickled to get out of it for a while he can't see straight!

MRS MILLER (*with a sniff*) I hope I know him better than you (*Then fussing about the room, setting this and that in place, while sid yawns drowsily and blinks his eyes*) Sleeping like a baby—so innocent-looking You'd think butter wouldn't melt in his mouth It all goes to show you never can tell by appearances—not even when it's your own child The idea!

SID (*drowsily*) Oh, Dick's all right, Essie Stop worrying

MRS MILLER (*with a sniff*) Of course, you'd say that I suppose you'll have him out with you painting the town red the next thing! (*As she is talking, RICHARD appears in the doorway from the sitting-room. He shows no ill effects from his experience the night before. In fact, he looks surprisingly healthy. He is dressed in old clothes that look as if they had been hurriedly flung on. His expression is one of hang-dog guilt mingled with a defensive defiance*)

RICHARD (*with self-conscious unconcern, ignoring his mother*) Hello, Sid.

MRS MILLER (*whirls on him*) What are you doing here, Young Man? I thought you were asleep! Seems to me you woke up pretty quick—just after your pa left the house!

RICHARD (*sulkily*) I wasn't asleep I heard you in the room

MRS MILLER (*outraged*) Do you mean to say you were deliberately deceiving—

RICHARD I wasn't deceiving You didn't ask if I was asleep

MRS MILLER It amounts to the same thing and you know it! It isn't enough your wickedness last night, but now you have to take to lying!

RICHARD I wasn't lying, Ma If you'd asked if I was asleep I'd have said no

MRS MILLER I've a good mind to send you straight back to bed and make you stay there!

RICHARD Ah, what for, Ma? It was only giving me a headache, lying there

MRS MILLER If you've got a headache, I guess you know it doesn't come from that! And imagine me standing there, and feeling sorry for you, like a fool—even having a run-in with your pa because— But you wait till he comes back tonight! If you don't catch it!

RICHARD (*sulkily*) I don't care

MRS MILLER You don't care? You talk as if you weren't sorry for what you did last night!

RICHARD (*defiantly*) I'm not sorry

MRS MILLER Richard! You ought to be ashamed! I'm beginning to think you're hardened in wickedness, that's what!

RICHARD (*with bitter despondency*) I'm not sorry because I don't care a darn what I did, or what's done to me, or anything about anything! I won't do it again—

MRS MILLER (*seizing on this to relent a bit*) Well, I'm glad to hear you say that, anyway!

RICHARD But that's not because I think it was wicked or any such old-fogy moral notion, but because it wasn't any fun. It didn't make me happy and funny like it does Uncle Sid—

SID (*drowsily*) What's that? Who's funny?

RICHARD (*ignoring him*) It only made me sadder—and sick—so I don't see any sense in it.

MRS MILLER Now you're talking sense! That's a good boy.

RICHARD But I'm not sorry I tried it once—curing the soul by means of the senses, as Oscar Wilde says (*Then with despairing pessimism*) But what does it matter what I do or don't do? Life is all a stupid farce! I'm through with it! (*With a sinister smile*) It's lucky there aren't any of General Gabler's pistols around—or you'd see if I'd stand it much longer!

MRS MILLER (*worriedly impressed by this threat—but pretending scorn*) I don't know anything about General Gabler—I suppose that's more of those darned books—but you're a silly gabbler yourself when you talk that way!

RICHARD (*darkly*) That's how little you know about me.

MRS MILLER (*giving in to her worry*) I wish you wouldn't say those terrible things—about life and pistols! You don't want to worry me to death, do you?

RICHARD (*reassuringly stoical now*) You needn't worry, Ma. It was only my despair talking. But I'm not a coward. I'll face—my fate.

MRS MILLER (*stands looking at him puzzledly—then gives it up with a sigh*) Well, all I can say is you're the queerest boy I ever did hear of! (*Then solicitously, putting her hand on his forehead*) How's your headache? Do you want me to get you some Bromo Seltzer?

RICHARD (*taken down—disgustedly*) No, I don't! Aw, Ma, you don't understand anything!

MRS MILLER Well, I understand this much. It's your liver, that's what! You'll take a good dose of salts tomorrow morning, and no nonsense about it! (*Then suddenly*) My goodness, I wonder what time it's getting to be. I've got to go upstairs. (*She goes to the front-parlor doorway—then turns*) You stay here, Richard, you hear? Remember you're not allowed out today—for a punishment. (*She hurries away* RICHARD sits in tragic gloom SID, without opening his eyes, speaks to him drowsily.)

SID Well, how's my fellow Rum Pot, as good old Downie calls us? Got a head?

RICHARD (*startled—sheepishly*) Aw, don't go dragging that up, Uncle

Sid I'm never going to be such a fool again, I tell you

SID (*with drowsy cynicism—not unmixed with bitterness at the end*) Seems to me I've heard someone say that before Who could it have been, I wonder? Why, if it wasn't Sid Davis! Yes, sir, I've heard him say that very thing a thousand times, must be But then he's always fooling, you can't take a word he says seriously, he's a card, that Sid is!

RICHARD (*darkly*) I was desperate, Uncle—even if she wasn't worth it I was wounded to the heart

SID I like to the quick better myself—more stylish (*Then sadly*) But you're right Love is hell on a poor sucker Don't I know it? (*RICHARD is disgusted and disdains to reply SID's chin sinks on his chest and he begins to breathe noisily, fast asleep RICHARD glances at him with aversion There is a sound of someone on the porch and the screen door is opened and MILDRED enters She smiles on seeing her uncle, then gives a start on seeing RICHARD*)

MILDRED Hello! Are you allowed up?

RICHARD Of course, I'm allowed up

MILDRED (*comes and sits in her father's chair at right, front, of table*) How did Pa punish you?

RICHARD He didn't He went back to the office without seeing me

MILDRED Well, you'll catch it later (*Then rebukingly*) And you ought to If you'd ever seen how awful you looked last night!

RICHARD Ah, forget it, can't you?

MILDRED Well, are you ever going to do it again, that's what I want to know

RICHARD What's that to you?

MILDRED (*with suppressed excitement*) Well, if you don't solemnly swear you won't—then I won't give you something I've got for you

RICHARD Don't try to kid me You haven't got anything

MILDRED I have, too

RICHARD What?

MILDRED Wouldn't you like to know! I'll give you three guesses

RICHARD (*with disdainful dignity*) Don't bother me I'm in no mood to play riddles with kids!

MILDRED Oh, well, if you're going to get snippy! Anyway, you haven't promised yet

RICHARD (*a prey to keen curiosity now*) I promise What is it?

MILDRED What would you like best in the world?

RICHARD I don't know What?

MILDRED And you pretend to be in love! If I told Muriel that!

RICHARD (*breathlessly*) Is it—from her?

MILDRED (*laughing*) Well, I guess it's a shame to keep you guessing Yes It is from her I was walking past her place just now when I saw her waving from their parlor win-

dow, and I went up and she said give this to Dick, and she didn't have a chance to say anything else because her mother called her and said she wasn't allowed to have company. So I took it—and here it is. *(She gives him a letter folded many times into a tiny square. RICHARD opens it with a trembling eagerness and reads. MILDRED watches him curiously—then sighs affectedly.)* Gee, it must be nice to be in love like you are—all with one person.

RICHARD *(his eyes shining)* Gee, Mid, do you know what she says—that she didn't mean a word in that other letter. Her old man made her write it. And she loves me and only me and always will, no matter how they punish her!

MILDRED My! I'd never think she had that much spunk.

RICHARD Huh! You don't know her! Think I could fall in love with a girl that was afraid to say her soul's her own? I should say not! *(Then more gleefully still.)* And she's going to try and sneak out and meet me tonight. She says she thinks she can do it. *(Then suddenly feeling this enthusiasm before MILDRED is entirely the wrong note for a cynical pessimist—with an affected bitter laugh.)* Ha! I knew darned well she couldn't hold out—that she'd ask to see me again. *(He misquotes cynically.)* "Women never know when the curtain has fallen. They always want another act."

MILDRED Is that so, Smarty?

RICHARD *(as if he were weighing the matter)* I don't know whether I'll consent to keep this date or not.

MILDRED Well, I know! You're not allowed out, you silly! So you can't!

RICHARD *(dropping all pretense—defiantly)* Can't I, though! You wait and see if I can't! I'll see her tonight if it's the last thing I ever do! I don't care how I'm punished after!

MILDRED *(admiringly)* Goodness! I never thought you had such nerve!

RICHARD You promise to keep your face shut, Mid—until after I've left—then you can tell Pa and Ma where I've gone—I mean, if they're worrying I'm off like last night.

MILDRED All right. Only you've got to do something for me when I ask.

RICHARD 'Course I will. *(Then excitedly.)* And say, Mid! Right now's the best chance for me to get away—while everyone's out! Ma'll be coming back soon and she'll keep watching me like a cat—*(He starts for the back parlor.)* I'm going. I'll sneak out the back.

MILDRED *(excitedly)* But what'll you do till nighttime? It's ages to wait.

RICHARD What do I care how long I wait! *(Intensely sincere now.)* I'll think of her—and dream! I'd wait a million years and never mind it—for her! *(He gives his sister a superior scornful glance.)* The trouble with you is, you don't understand what love means! *(He disappears through the back parlor. MILDRED looks after him admiringly, smoothes her hair and begins to snore peacefully.)*

ACT FOUR

SCENE II

SCENE—A strip of beach along the harbor. At left, a bank of dark earth, running half-diagonally back along the beach, marking the line where the sand of the beach ends and fertile land begins. The top of the bank is grassy and the trailing boughs of willow trees extend out over it and over a part of the beach. At left, front, is a path leading up the bank, between the willows. On the beach, at center, front, a white, flat-bottomed rowboat is drawn up, its bow about touching the bank, the painter trailing up the bank, evidently made fast to the trunk of a willow. Halfway down the sky, at rear, left, the crescent of the new moon casts a soft, mysterious, caressing light over everything. The sand of the beach shimmers palely. The forward half (left of center) of the rowboat is in the deep shadow cast by the willow, the stern section is in moonlight. In the distance, the orchestra of a summer hotel can be heard very faintly at intervals.

RICHARD is discovered sitting sideways on the gunwale of the rowboat near the stern. He is facing left, watching the path. He is in a great state of anxious expectancy, squirming about uncomfortably on the narrow gunwale, kicking at the sand resolutely, twirling his straw hat, with a bright-colored band in stripes, around on his finger.

RICHARD (*thinking aloud*) Must be nearly nine. I can hear the Town Hall clock strike, it's so still tonight.

Gee, I'll bet Ma had a fit when she found out I'd sneaked out. I'll catch hell when I get back, but it'll be worth it. If only Muriel turns up. She didn't say for certain she could. Gosh, I wish she'd come! Am I sure she wrote nine?

(He puts the straw hat on the seat amidships and pulls the folded letter out of his pocket and peers at it in the moonlight.) Yes, it's nine, all right. (He starts to put the note back in his pocket, then stops and kisses it—then shoves it away hastily, sheepish, looking around him shamefacedly, as if afraid he were being ob-

served.) Aw, that's silly. No, it isn't either. Not when you're really in love. (He jumps to his feet restlessly.) Darn it, I wish she'd show up!

Think of something else that'll make the time pass quicker where was I this time last night? Waiting outside the Pleasant Beach House. Belle—ah, forget her! Now, when Muriel's coming that's a fine time to think of—! But you hugged and kissed her. Not until I was drunk, I didn't. And then it was all showing off. Darned fool! And I didn't go upstairs with her. Even if she was pretty. Aw, she wasn't pretty. She was all painted up. She was just a whore. She was

everything dirty Muriel's a million times prettier anyway Muriel and I will go upstairs when we're married but that will be beautiful but I oughtn't even to think of that yet it's not right

I'd never—now and she'd never she's a decent girl I couldn't love her if she wasn't but after we're married

(He gives a little shiver of passionate longing—then resolutely turns his mind away from these improper, almost degrading thoughts) That damned birdcage kicking me I'll bet you if I hadn't been drunk I'd have given him one good punch in the nose, even if he could have licked me after!

(Then with a shiver of shamefaced revulsion and self-disgust) Aw, you deserved a kick in the pants making such a darned slob of yourself reciting the Ballad of Reading Gao! to those lowbrows!

you must have been a fine sight when you got home! having to be put to bed and getting sick! Phaw!

(He squirms disgustedly) Think of something else, can't you?

I recite something see if you remember

'Nay, let us walk from fire unto fire

From passionate pain to deadlier delight—

I am too young to live without desire,

Too young art thou to waste this summernight—"

gee, that's a peach! I'll have to memorize the rest and recite it to Muriel the next time I wish I could write poetry about her and me (He sighs and stares around him at the night) Gee, it's beautiful tonight as if it was a special night for me and Muriel

Gee, I love tonight I love the sand, and the trees, and the grass, and the water and the sky, and the moon it's all in me and I'm in it God, it's so beautiful! (He stands staring at the moon with a rapt face From the distance the Town Hall clock begins to strike

This brings him back to earth with a start) There's nine now (He peers at the path apprehensively) I don't see her she must have got caught (Almost tearfully) Gee,

I hate to go home and catch hell without having seen her! (Then calling a manly cynicism to his aid) Aw, who ever heard of a woman ever being on time I ought to know enough about life by this time not to expect

(Then with sudden excitement) There she comes now Gosh! (He heaves a huge sigh of relief—then recites dramatically to himself, his eyes on the approaching figure)

"And lo my love, mine own soul's heart, more dear Than mine own soul, more beautiful than God, Who hath my being between the hands of her—"

(Then hastily) Mustn't let her know I'm so tickled I ought to be mad about that first letter, anyway if women are too sure of you, they treat you like slaves let her suffer, for a change

(He starts to stroll around with exaggerated carelessness, turning his back on the path, hands in pockets, whistling with an air of indifference "Waiting at the Church"

MURIEL MC COMBER enters from down the path, left front She is fifteen, going on sixteen She is a pretty girl with a plump, graceful little figure, fluffy, light-brown hair, big naïve wondering dark eyes, a round,

dimpled face, a melting drawly voice Just now she is in a great thrilled state of timid adventurousness She hesitates in the shadow at the foot of the path, waiting for RICHARD to see her, but he resolutely goes on whistling with back turned, and she has to call him)

MURIEL Oh, Dick

RICHARD *(turns around with an elaborate simulation of being disturbed in the midst of profound meditation)* Oh, hello Is it nine already? Gosh, time passes—when you're thinking

MURIEL *(coming toward him as far as the edge of the shadow—disappointedly)* I thought you'd be waiting right here at the end of the path I'll bet you'd forgotten I was even coming

RICHARD *(strolling a little toward her but not too far—carelessly)* No, I hadn't forgotten, honest But I got to thinking about life

MURIEL You might think of me for a change, after all the risk I've run to see you! *(Hesitating timidly on the edge of the shadow)* Dick! You come here to me I'm afraid to go out in that bright moonlight where anyone might see me

RICHARD *(coming toward her—scornfully)* Aw, there you go again—always scared of life!

MURIEL *(indignantly)* Dick Miller, I do think you've got an awful nerve to say that after all the risks I've run making this date and then sneaking out! You didn't take the trouble to sneak any letter to me, I notice!

RICHARD No, because after your first letter, I thought everything was dead and past between us

MURIEL And I'll bet you didn't care one little bit! *(On the verge of humiliated tears)* Oh, I was a fool ever to come here! I've got a good notion to go right home and never speak to you again! *(She half turns back toward the path)*

RICHARD *(frightened—immediately becomes terribly sincere—grabbing her hand)* Aw, don't go, Muriel! Please! I didn't mean anything like that, honest I didn't! Gee, if you knew how broken-hearted I was by that first letter, and how darned happy your second letter made me—!

MURIEL *(happily relieved—but appreciates she has the upper hand now and doesn't relent at once)* I don't believe you

RICHARD You ask Mid how happy I was She can prove it

MURIEL She'd say anything you told her to I don't care anything about what she'd say It's you You've got to swear to me—

RICHARD I swear!

MURIEL *(demurely)* Well then, all right, I'll believe you

RICHARD *(his eyes on her face lovingly—genuine adoration in his voice)* Gosh, you're pretty tonight, Muriel! It seems ages since we've been together! If you knew how I've suffered—!

MURIEL I did, too

RICHARD *(unable to resist falling into his tragic literary pose for a moment).*

The despair in my soul— (He recites dramatically) "Something was dead in each of us, And what was dead was Hope!" That was me! My hope of happiness was dead! (Then with sincere boyish fervor) Gosh, Muriel, it sure is wonderful to be with you again! (He puts a timid arm around her awkwardly)

MURIEL (shyly) I'm glad—it makes you happy I'm happy, too

RICHARD Can't I—won't you let me kiss you—now? Please! (He bends his face toward hers)

MURIEL (ducking her head away—timidly) No You mustn't Don't—

RICHARD Aw, why can't I?

MURIEL Because—I'm afraid

RICHARD (discomfited—taking his arm from around her—a bit sulky and impatient with her) Aw, that's what you always say! You're always so afraid! Aren't you ever going to let me?

MURIEL I will—sometime.

RICHARD When?

MURIEL Soon, maybe

RICHARD Tonight, will you?

MURIEL (coily) I'll see

RICHARD Promise?

MURIEL I promise—maybe.

RICHARD All right You remember you've promised (Then coaxingly) Aw, don't let's stand here Come on out and we can sit down in the boat

MURIEL (hesitantly) It's so bright out there

RICHARD No one'll see You know there's never anyone around here at night

MURIEL (illogically) I know there isn't That's why I thought it would be the best place But there might be someone

RICHARD (taking her hand and tugging at it gently) There isn't a soul (MURIEL steps out a little and looks up and down fearfully RICHARD goes on insistently) Aw, what's the use of a moon if you can't see it!

MURIEL But it's only a new moon That's not much to look at

RICHARD But I want to see you I can't here in the shadow I want to—drink in—all your beauty

MURIEL (can't resist this) Well, all right—only I can't stay only a few minutes (She lets him lead her toward the stern of the boat)

RICHARD (pleadingly) Aw, you can stay a little while, can't you? Please! (He helps her in and she settles herself in the stern seat of the boat, facing diagonally left front)

MURIEL A little while (He sits beside her) But I've got to be home in bed again pretending to be asleep by ten o'clock That's the time Pa and Ma come up to bed, as regular as clock work, and Ma always looks into my room

RICHARD But you'll have oodles of time to do that

MURIEL (excitedly) Dick, you have no idea what I went through to get

here tonight! My, but it was exciting! You know Pa's punishing me by sending me to bed at eight sharp, and I had to get all undressed and into bed 'cause at half-past he sends Ma up to make sure I've obeyed, and she came up, and I pretended to be asleep, and she went down again, and I got up and dressed in such a hurry—I must look a sight, don't I?

RICHARD You do not! You look wonderful!

MURIEL And then I sneaked down the back stairs And the pesky old stairs squeaked, and my heart was in my mouth, I was so scared, and then I sneaked out through the back yard, keeping in the dark under the trees, and— My, but it was exciting! Dick, you don't realize how I've been punished for your sake Pa's been so mean and nasty, I've almost hated him!

RICHARD And you don't realize what I've been through for you—and what I'm in for—for sneaking out— (*Then darkly*) And for what I did last night—what your letter made me do!

MURIEL (*made terribly curious by his ominous tone*) What did my letter make you do?

RICHARD (*beginning to glory in this*) It's too long a story—and let the dead past bury its dead (*Then with real feeling*) Only it isn't past, I can tell you! What I'll catch when Pa gets hold of me!

MURIEL Tell me, Dick! Begin at the beginning and tell me!

RICHARD (*tragically*) Well, after your old—your father left our place I caught holy hell from Pa

MURIEL You mustn't swear!

RICHARD (*somberly*) Hell is the only word that can describe it And on top of that, to torture me more, he gave me your letter After I'd read that I didn't want to live any more Life seemed like a tragic farce

MURIEL I'm so awful sorry, Dick—honest I am! But you might have known I'd never write that unless—

RICHARD I thought your love for me was dead I thought you'd never loved me, that you'd only been cruelly mocking me—to torture me!

MURIEL Dick! I'd never! You know I'd never!

RICHARD I wanted to die I sat and brooded about death Finally I made up my mind I'd kill myself

MURIEL (*excitedly*) Dick! You didn't!

RICHARD I did, too! If there'd been one of Hedda Gabler's pistols around, you'd have seen if I wouldn't have done it beautifully! I thought, when I'm dead, she'll be sorry she ruined my life!

MURIEL (*cuddling up a little to him*) If you ever had! I'd have died, too! Honest, I would!

RICHARD But suicide is the act of a coward That's what stopped me (*Then with a bitter change of tone*) And anyway, I thought to myself, she isn't worth it

MURIEL (*huffily*) That's a nice thing to say!

RICHARD Well, if you meant what was in that letter, you wouldn't have been worth it, would you?

MURIEL But I've told you Pa—

RICHARD So I said to myself, I'm through with women, they're all alike!

MURIEL I'm not

RICHARD And I thought, what difference does it make what I do now? I might as well forget her and lead the pace that kulls, and drown my sorrows! You know I had eleven dollars saved up to buy you something for your birthday, but I thought, she's dead to me now and why shouldn't I throw it away? *(Then hastily)* I've still got almost five left, Muriel, and I can get you something nice with that

MURIEL *(excitedly)* What do I care about your old presents? You tell me what you did!

RICHARD *(darkly again)* After it was dark, I sneaked out and went to a low dive I know about

MURIEL Dick Miller, I don't believe you ever!

RICHARD You ask them at the Pleasant Beach House if I didn't! They won't forget me in a hurry!

MURIEL *(impressed and horrified)* You went there? Why, that's a terrible place! Pa says it ought to be closed by the police!

RICHARD *(darkly)* I said it was a dive, didn't I? It's a "secret house of shame" And they let me into a secret room behind the barroom. There

wasn't anyone there but a Princeton Senior I know—he belongs to Tiger Inn and he's fullback on the football team—and he had two chorus girls from New York with him, and they were all drinking champagne

MURIEL *(disturbed by the entrance of the chorus girls)* Dick Miller! I hope you didn't notice—

RICHARD *(carelessly)* I had a highball by myself and then I noticed one of the girls—the one that wasn't with the fullback—looking at me. She had strange-looking eyes. And then she asked me if I wouldn't drink champagne with them and come and sit with her.

MURIEL She must have been a nice thing! *(Then a bit falteringly)* And did—you?

RICHARD *(with tragic bitterness)* Why shouldn't I, when you'd told me in that letter you'd never see me again?

MURIEL *(almost tearfully)* But you ought to have known Pa made me—

RICHARD I didn't know that then. *(Then rubbing it in)* Her name was Belle. She had yellow hair—the kind that burns and stings you!

MURIEL I'll bet it was dyed!

RICHARD She kept smoking one cigarette after another—but that's nothing for a chorus girl.

MURIEL *(indignantly)* She was low and bad, that's what she was or she couldn't be a chorus girl, and her smoking cigarettes proves it! *(Then falteringly again)* And then what happened?

RICHARD (*carelessly*) Oh, we just kept drinking champagne—I bought a round—and then I had a fight with the barkeep and knocked him down because he'd insulted her. He was a great big thug but—

MURIEL (*huffily*) I don't see how he could—insult that kind! And why did you fight for her? Why didn't the Princeton fullback who'd brought them there? He must have been bigger than you.

RICHARD (*stopped for a moment—then quickly*) He was too drunk by that time.

MURIEL And were you drunk?

RICHARD Only a little then. I was worse later. (*Proudly*) You ought to have seen me when I got home! I was on the verge of delirium tremens!

MURIEL I'm glad I didn't see you. You must have been awful. I hate people who get drunk. I'd have hated you!

RICHARD Well, it was all your fault, wasn't it? If you hadn't written that letter—

MURIEL But I've told you I didn't mean— (*Then faltering but fascinated*) But what happened with that Belle—after—before you went home?

RICHARD Oh, we kept drinking champagne and she said she'd fallen in love with me at first sight and she came and sat on my lap and kissed me.

MURIEL (*stiffening*) Oh!

RICHARD (*quickly, afraid he has gone too far*) But it was only all in fun, and then we just kept on drinking champagne, and finally I said good night and came home.

MURIEL And did you kiss her?

RICHARD No, I didn't.

MURIEL (*distractedly*) You did, too! You're lying and you know it. You did, too! (*Then tearfully*) And there I was right at that time lying in bed not able to sleep, wondering how I was ever going to see you again and crying my eyes out, while you—! (*She suddenly jumps to her feet in a tearful fury*) I hate you! I wish you were dead! I'm going home this minute! I never want to lay eyes on you again! And this time I mean it! (*She tries to jump out of the boat but he holds her back. All the pose has dropped from him now and he is in a frightened state of contrition*)

RICHARD (*imploringly*) Muriel! Wait! Listen!

MURIEL I don't want to listen! Let me go! If you don't I'll bite your hand!

RICHARD I won't let you go! You've got to let me explain! I never—! Ouch! (*For MURIEL has bitten his hand and it hurts, and, stung by the pain, he lets go instinctively, and she jumps quickly out of the boat and starts running toward the path. RICHARD calls after her with bitter despair and hurt*) All right! Go if you want to—if you haven't the decency to let me explain! I hate you, too! I'll go and see Belle!

MURIEL (*seemg he isn't following her, stops at the foot of the path—*

defiantly) Well, go and see her—
if that's the kind of girl you like!
What do I care? (*Then as he only
stares before him broodingly, sitting
dejectedly in the stern of the boat,
a pathetic figure of injured grief*)
You can't explain! What can you ex-
plain? You owned up you kissed her!

RICHARD I did not I said she kissed
me

MURIEL (*scornfully, but drifting
back a step in his direction*) And I
suppose you just sat and let yourself
be kissed! Tell that to the Marines!

RICHARD (*injuredly*) All right! If
you're going to call me a liar every
word I say—

MURIEL (*drifting back another
step*) I didn't call you a liar I only
meant—it sounds fishy Don't you
know it does?

RICHARD I don't know anything I
only know I wish I was dead!

MURIEL (*gently reproving*) You
oughtn't to say that It's wicked
(*Then after a pause*) And I sup-
pose you'll tell me you didn't fall in
love with her?

RICHARD (*scornfully*) I should say
nor! Fall in love with that kind of
girl! What do you take me for?

MURIEL (*practically*) How do you
know what you did if you drank so
much champagne?

RICHARD I kept my head—with her
I'm not a sucker, no matter what
you think!

MURIEL (*drifting nearer*) Then you
didn't—love her?

RICHARD I hated her! She wasn't
even pretty! And I had a fight with
her before I left, she got so fresh I
told her I loved you and never could
love anyone else, and for her to leave
me alone

MURIEL But you said just now you
were going to see her—

RICHARD That was only bluff I
wouldn't—unless you left me Then
I wouldn't care what I did—any more
than I did last night (*Then sudden-
ly defiant*) And what if I did kiss
her once or twice? I only did it to
get back at you!

MURIEL Dick!

RICHARD You're a fine one to blame
me—when it was all your fault! Why
can't you be fair? Didn't I think you
were out of my life forever? Hadn't
you written me you were? Answer
me that!

MURIEL But I've told you a million
times that Pa—

RICHARD Why didn't you have more
sense than to let him make you write
it? Was it my fault you didn't?

MURIEL It was your fault for being
so stupid! You ought to have known
he stood right over me and told me
each word to write If I'd refused, it
would only have made everything
worse I had to pretend, so I'd get a
chance to see you Don't you see,
Silly? And I had sand enough to
sneak out to meet you tonight, didn't
I? (*He doesn't answer She moves
nearer*) Still I can see how you felt
the way you did—and maybe I am to
blame for that So I'll forgive and for-
get, Dick—if you'll swear to me you
didn't even think of loving that—

RICHARD (*eagerly*) I didn't! I swear,
Muriel I couldn't I love you!

MURIEL Well, then—I still love you

RICHARD Then come back here, why
don't you?

MURIEL (*coolly*) It's getting late

RICHARD It's not near half-past yet

MURIEL (*comes back and sits down
by him shyly*) All right—only I'll
have to go soon, Dick (*He puts his
arm around her She cuddles up
close to him*) I'm sorry—I hurt your
hand

RICHARD That was nothing It felt
wonderful—even to have you bite!

MURIEL (*impulsively takes his hand
and kisses it*) There! That'll cure
it (*She is overcome by confusion at
her boldness*)

RICHARD You shouldn't—waste that
—on my hand (*Then tremblingly*)
You said—you'd let me—

MURIEL I said, maybe

RICHARD Please, Muriel You know
—I want it so!

MURIEL Will it wash off—her kisses
—make you forget you ever—for al-
ways?

RICHARD I should say so! I'd never
remember—anything but it—never
want anything but it—ever again

MURIEL (*shyly lifting her lips*)
Then—all night—Dick (*He kisses*

*her tremblingly and for a moment
their lips remain together Then she
lets her head sink on his shoulder
and sighs softly*) The moon is beau-
tiful, isn't it?

RICHARD (*kissing her hair*) Not as
beautiful as you! Nothing is! (*Then
after a pause*) Won't it be wonder-
ful when we're married?

MURIEL Yes—but it's so long to wait

RICHARD Perhaps I needn't go to
Yale Perhaps Pa will give me a job
Then I'd soon be making enough
to—

MURIEL You better do what your pa
thinks best—and I'd like you to be
at Yale (*Then patting his face*)
Poor you! Do you think he'll punish
you awful?

RICHARD (*intensely*) I don't know
and I don't care! Nothing would
have kept me from seeing you to-
night—not if I'd had to crawl over
red-hot coals! (*Then falling back on
Swinburne—but with passionate sin-
cerity*) You have my being between
the hands of you! You are "my love,
mine own soul's heart, more dear
than mine own soul, more beautiful
than God!"

MURIEL (*shocked and delighted*)
Sssh! It's wrong to say that

RICHARD (*adoringly*) Gosh, but I
love you! Gosh, I love you—Darling!

MURIEL I love you, too—Sweetheart!
(*They kiss Then she lets her head
sink on his shoulder again and they
both sit in a rapt trance, staring at
the moon After a pause—dreamily*)

Where'll we go on our honeymoon, Dick? To Niagara Falls?

RICHARD (*scornfully*) That dump where all the silly fools go? I should say not! (*With passionate romanticism*) No, we'll go to some far-off wonderful place! (*He calls on Kip-*

ling to help him) Somewhere out on the Long Trail—the trail that is always new—on the road to Mandalay! We'll watch the dawn come up like thunder out of China!

MURIEL (*hazily but happily*) That'll be wonderful, won't it?

CURTAIN

ACT FOUR

SCENE III

SCENE—The sitting-room of the MILLER house again—about 10 o'clock the same night MILLER is sitting in his rocker at left, front, of table, his wife in the rocker at right, front, of table Moonlight shines through the screen door at right, rear Only the green-shaded reading lamp is lit and by its light MILLER, his specs on, is reading a book while his wife, sewing basket in lap, is working industriously on a doily MRS MILLER's face wears an expression of unworried content MILLER's face has also lost its look of harassed preoccupation, although he still is a prey to certain misgivings, when he allows himself to think of them Several books are piled on the table by his elbow, the books that have been confiscated from RICHARD

MILLER (*chuckles at something he reads—then closes the book and puts it on the table* MRS MILLER looks up from her sewing) This Shaw's a comical cuss—even if his ideas are so crazy they oughtn't to allow them to be printed And that Swinburne's got a fine swing to his poetry—if he'd only choose some other subjects besides loose women

MRS MILLER (*smiling teasingly*) I can see where you're becoming corrupted by those books, too—pretending to read them out of duty to

Richard, when your nose has been glued to the page!

MILLER No, no—but I've got to be honest There's something to them That Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, now I read that over again and liked it even better than I had before—parts of it, that is, where it isn't all about boozing

MRS MILLER (*has been busy with her own thoughts during this last—with a deep sigh of relief*) My, but I'm glad Mildred told me where

Richard went off to I'd have worried my heart out if she hadn't But now, it's all right

MILLER (*frowning a little*) I'd hardly go so far as to say that Just because we know he's all right tonight doesn't mean last night is wiped out He's still got to be punished for that

MRS MILLER (*defensively*) Well, if you ask me, I think after the way I punished him all day, and the way I know he's punished himself, he's had about all he deserves I've told you how sorry he was, and how he said he'd never touch liquor again It didn't make him feel happy like Sid, but only sad and sick, so he didn't see anything in it for him

MILLER Well, if he's really got that view of it driven into his skull, I don't know but I'm glad it all happened That'll protect him more than a thousand lectures—just horse sense about himself (*Then frowning again*) Still, I can't let him do such things and go scot-free And then, besides, there's another side to it— (*He stops abruptly*)

MRS MILLER (*uneasily*) What do you mean, another side?

MILLER (*hastily*) I mean, discipline There's got to be some discipline in a family I don't want him to get the idea he's got a stuffed shirt at the head of the table No, he's got to be punished, if only to make the lesson stick in his mind, and I'm going to tell him he can't go to Yale, seeing he's so undependable

MRS MILLER (*up in arms at once*) Not go to Yale! I guess he can go to Yale! Every man of your means in

town is sending his boys to college! What would folks think of you? You let Wilbur go, and you'd have let Lawrence, only he didn't want to, and you're letting Arthur! If our other children can get the benefit of a college education, you're not going to pick on Richard—

MILLER Hush up, for God's sake! If you'd let me finish what I started to say! I said I'd tell him that now—bluff—then later on I'll change my mind, if he behaves himself

MRS MILLER Oh well, if that's all— (*Then defensively again*) But it's your duty to give him every benefit He's got an exceptional brain, that boy has! He's proved it by the way he likes to read all those deep plays and books and poetry

MILLER But I thought you— (*He stops, grinning helplessly*)

MRS MILLER You thought I what?

MILLER Never mind

MRS MILLER (*sniffs, but thinks it better to let this pass*) You mark my words, that boy's going to turn out to be a great lawyer, or a great doctor, or a great writer, or—

MILLER (*grinning*) You agree he's going to be great, anyway

MRS MILLER Yes, I most certainly have a lot of faith in Richard

MILLER Well, so have I, as far as that goes

MRS MILLER (*after a pause—judicially*) And as for his being in love with Muriel, I don't see but what it might work out real well Richard could do worse

MILLER But I thought you had no use for her, though. she was stupid

MRS MILLER Well, so I did, but if she's good for Richard and he wants her— (*Then inconsequentially*) Ma used to say you weren't overbright, but she changed her mind when she saw I didn't care if you were or not

MILLER (*not exactly pleased by this*) Well, I've been bright enough to—

MRS MILLER (*going on as if he had not spoken*) And Muriel's real cute-looking, I have to admit that Takes after her mother Alice Briggs was the prettiest girl before she married

MILLER Yes, and Muriel will get big as a house after she's married, the same as her mother did That's the trouble A man never can tell what he's letting himself in for— (*He stops, feeling his wife's eyes fixed on him with indignant suspicion*)

MRS MILLER (*sharply*) I'm not too fat and don't you say it!

MILLER Who was talking about you?

MRS MILLER And I'd rather have some flesh on my bones than be built like a string bean and bore a hole in a chair every time I sat down—like some people!

MILLER (*ignoring the insult—flatteringly*) Why, no one'd ever call you fat, Essie You're only plump, like a good figure ought to be

MRS MILLER (*childishly pleased—gratefully giving tit for tat*) Well, you're not skinny, either—only slender—and I think you've been putting on weight lately, too. (*Having thus*

squared matters she takes up her sewing again A pause Then MILLER asks incredulously)

MILLER You don't mean to tell me you're actually taking this Mueel crush of Richard's seriously, do you? I know it's a good thing to encourage right now but—pshaw, why, Richard'll probably forget all about her before he's away six months, and she'll have forgotten him

MRS MILLER Don't be so cynical (*Then, after a pause, thoughtfully*) Well, anyway, he'll always have it to remember—no matter what happens after—and that's something

MILLER You bet that's something (*Then with a grin*) You surprise me at times with your deep wisdom

MRS MILLER You don't give me credit for ever having common sense, that's why (*She goes back to her sewing*)

MILLER (*after a pause*) Where'd you say Sid and Lily had gone off to?

MRS MILLER To the beach to listen to the band (*She sighs sympathetically*) Poor Lily! Sid'll never change, and she'll never marry him But she seems to get some queer satisfaction out of fussing over him like a hen that's hatched a duck—though Lord knows I wouldn't in her shoes!

MILLER Arthur's up with Elsie Rand, I suppose?

MRS MILLER Of course

MILLER Where's Mildred?

MRS MILLER Out walking with her latest I've forgot who it is I can't keep track of them (*She smiles*)

MILLER (*smiling*) Then, from all reports, we seem to be completely surrounded by love!

MRS MILLER Well, we've had our share, haven't we? We don't have to begrudge it to our children (*Then has a sudden thought*) But I've done all this talking about Muriel and Richard and clean forgot how wild old McComber was against it! But he'll get over that, I suppose

MILLER (*with a chuckle*) He has already I ran into him upstreet this afternoon and he was meek as pie. He backed water and said he guessed I was right. Richard had just copied stuff out of books, and kids would be kids, and so on. So I came off my high horse a bit—but not too far—and I guess all that won't bother anyone any more (*Then rubbing his hands together—with a boyish grin of pleasure*) And I told you about getting that business from Lawson, didn't I? It's been a good day, Essie—a darned good day! (*From the hall beyond the front parlor the sound of the front door being opened and shut is heard. MRS MILLER leans forward to look, pushing her specs up*)

MRS MILLER (*in a whisper*) It's Richard

MILLER (*immediately assuming an expression of becoming gravity*) Hmm (*He takes off his spectacles and puts them back in their case and straightens himself in his chair*) RICHARD comes slowly in from the front parlor. He walks like one in a trance, his eyes shining with a dreamy happiness, his spirit still too exalted to be conscious of his surroundings, or to remember the threatened punishment. He carries

his straw hat dangling in his hand, quite unaware of its existence.)

RICHARD (*dreamily, like a ghost addressing fellow shades*) Hello

MRS MILLER (*staring at him worriedly*) Hello, Richard

MILLER (*sizing him up shrewdly*) Hello, Son

(*RICHARD moves past his mother and comes to the far corner, left front, where the light is dimmest, and sits down on the sofa, and stares before him, his hat dangling in his hand*)

MRS MILLER (*with frightened suspicion now*) Goodness, he acts queer! Nat, you don't suppose he's been—?

MILLER (*with a reassuring smile*) No. It's love, not liquor, this time

MRS MILLER (*only partly reassured—sharply*) Richard! What's the matter with you? (*He comes to himself with a start. She goes on scoldingly*) How many times have I told you to hang up your hat in the hall when you come in! (*He looks at his hat as if he were surprised at its existence. She gets up fussily and goes to him*) Here. Give it to me. I'll hang it up for you this once. And what are you sitting over here in the dark for? Don't forget your father's been waiting to talk to you! (*She comes back to the table and he follows her, still half in a dream, and stands by his father's chair*) MRS MILLER starts for the hall with his hat.)

MILLER (*quietly but firmly now*) You better leave Richard and me alone for a while, Essie

MRS MILLER (*turns to stare at him apprehensively*) Well—all right. I'll

go sit on the piazza Call me if you want me *(Then a bit pleadingly)* But you'll remember all I've said, Nat, won't you? *(MILLER nods reassuringly She disappears through the front parlor RICHARD, keenly conscious of himself as the about-to-be-sentenced criminal by this time, looks guilty and a bit defiant, searches his father's expressionless face with uneasy side glances, and steels himself for what is coming)*

MILLER *(casually, indicating MRS MILLER's rocker)* Sit down, Richard *(RICHARD slumps awkwardly into the chair and sits in a self-conscious, unnatural position MILLER sizes him up keenly—then suddenly smiles and asks with quiet mockery)* Well, how are the vine leaves in your hair this evening?

RICHARD *(totally unprepared for this approach—shamefacedly mutters)* I don't know, Pa

MILLER Turned out to be poison ivy, didn't they? *(Then kindly)* But you needn't look so alarmed I'm not going to read you any temperance lecture That'd bore me more than it would you And, in spite of your damn foolishness last night, I'm still giving you credit for having brains So I'm pretty sure anything I could say to you you've already said to yourself

RICHARD *(his head down—humbly)* I know I was a darned fool

MILLER *(thinking it well to rub in this aspect—disgustedly)* You sure were—not only a fool but a downright, stupid, disgusting fool! *(RICHARD squirms, his head still lower)* It was bad enough for you to let me and Arthur see you, but to appeal like

that before your mother and Muredred—! And I wonder if Muriel would think you were so fine if she ever saw you as you looked and acted then I think she'd give you your walking papers for keeps And you couldn't blame her No nice girl wants to give her love to a stupid drunk!

RICHARD *(writhing)* I know, Pa

MILLER *(after a pause—quietly)* All right Then that settles—the booze end of it *(He sizes RICHARD up searchingly—then suddenly speaks sharply)* But there is another thing that's more serious How about that tart you went to bed with at the Pleasant Beach House?

RICHARD *(flabbergasted—stammers)* You know—? But I didn't! If they've told you about her down there, they must have told you I didn't! She wanted me to—but I wouldn't I gave her the five dollars just so she'd let me out of it Honest, Pa, I didn't! She made everything seem rotten and dirty—and—I didn't want to do a thing like that to Muriel—no matter how bad I thought she'd treated me—even after I felt drunk, I didn't I honest!

MILLER How'd you happen to meet this lady, anyway?

RICHARD I can't tell that, Pa I'd have to snitch on someone—and you wouldn't want me to do that

MILLER *(a bit taken aback)* No I suppose I wouldn't Hmm Well I believe you—and I guess that settles that *(Then, after a quick, furtive glance at RICHARD, he nerves himself for the ordeal and begins with a shamefaced, self-conscious solemn)*

ty) But listen here, Richard, it's about time you and I had a serious talk about—hmm—certain matters pertaining to—and now that the subject's come up of its own accord, it's a good time—I mean, there's no use in procrastinating further—so, here goes (*But it doesn't go smoothly and as he goes on he becomes more and more guiltily embarrassed and self-conscious and his expressions more stilted* RICHARD *sedulously avoids even glancing at him, his own embarrassment made tenfold more painful by his father's*) Richard, you have now come to the age when—Well, you're a fully developed man, in a way, and it's only natural for you to have certain desires of the flesh, to put it that way—I mean, pertaining to the opposite sex—certain natural feelings and temptations—that'll want to be gratified—and you'll want to gratify them Hmm—well, human society being organized as it is, there's only one outlet for—unless you're a scoundrel and go around ruining decent girls—which you're not, of course Well, there are a certain class of women—always have been and always will be as long as human nature is what it is—It's wrong, maybe, but what can you do about it? I mean, girls like that one you—girls there's something doing with—and lots of 'em are pretty, and it's human nature if you—But that doesn't mean to ever get mixed up with them seriously! You just have what you want and pay 'em and forget it I know that sounds hard and unfeeling, but we're talking facts and—But don't think I'm encouraging you to—If you can stay away from 'em, all the better—but if—why—hmm—Here's what I'm driving at, Richard They're apt to be whited sepulchres—I mean, your whole life might be ruined if—so, darn it, you've

got to know how to—I mean, there are ways and means—(*Suddenly he can go no farther and winds up helplessly*) But, hell, I suppose you boys talk all this over among yourselves and you know more about it than I do I'll admit I'm no authority I never had anything to do with such women, and it'll be a hell of a lot better for you if you never do!

RICHARD (*without looking at him*) I'm never going to, Pa (*Then shocked indignation coming into his voice*) I don't see how you could think I could—now—when you know I love Muriel and am going to marry her I'd die before I'd—!

MILLER (*immensely relieved—enthusiastically*) That's the talk! By God, I'm proud of you when you talk like that! (*Then hastily*) And now that's all of that There's nothing more to say and we'll forget it, eh?

RICHARD (*after a pause*) How are you going to punish me, Pa?

MILLER I was sort of forgetting that, wasn't I? Well, I'd thought of telling you you couldn't go to Yale—

RICHARD (*eagerly*) Don't I have to go? Gee, that's great! Muriel thought you'd want me to I was telling her I'd rather you gave me a job on the paper because then she and I could get married sooner (*Then with a boyish grin*) Gee, Pa, you picked a lemon That isn't any punishment. You'll have to do something besides that

MILLER (*grimly—but only half concealing an answering grin*) Then you'll go to Yale and you'll stay there till you graduate, that's the answer to that! Muriel's got good sense and

you haven't! (RICHARD accepts this philosophically) And now we're finished, you better call your mother (RICHARD opens the screen door and calls "Ma," and a moment later she comes in. She glances quickly from son to husband and immediately knows that all is well and tactfully refrains from all questions)

MRS MILLER My, it's a beautiful night. The moon's way down low—almost setting. (She sits in her chair and sighs contentedly. RICHARD remains standing by the door, staring out at the moon, his face pale in the moonlight.)

MILLER (with a nod at RICHARD, winking at his wife) Yes, I don't believe I've hardly ever seen such a beautiful night—with such a wonderful moon. Have you, Richard?

RICHARD (turning to them—enthusiastically) No! It was wonderful—down at the beach—(He stops abruptly, smiling shyly.)

MILLER (watching his son—after a pause—quietly) I can only remember a few nights that were as beautiful as this—and they were long ago, when your mother and I were young and planning to get married.

RICHARD (stares at him wondering for a moment, then quickly from his father to his mother and back again, strangely, as if he'd never seen them before—then he looks almost disgusted and swallows as if an acrid taste had come into his mouth—but then suddenly his face is transformed by a smile of shy understanding and sympathy. He speaks shyly) Yes, I'll bet those must have been wonderful nights, too. You sort of

forget the moon was the same way back then—and everything.

MILLER (huskily) You're all right, Richard. (He gets up and blows his nose.)

MRS MILLER (fondly) You're a good boy, Richard. (RICHARD looks dreadfully shy and embarrassed at this. His father comes to his rescue.)

MILLER Better get to bed early to-night, Son, hadn't you?

RICHARD I couldn't sleep. Can't I go out on the piazza and sit for a while—until the moon sets?

MILLER All right. Then you better say good night now. I don't know about your mother, but I'm going to bed right away. I'm dead tired.

MRS MILLER So am I.

RICHARD (goes to her and kisses her). Good night, Ma.

MRS MILLER Good night. Don't you stay up till all hours now.

RICHARD (comes to his father and stands awkwardly before him). Good night, Pa.

MILLER (puts his arm around him and gives him a hug). Good night, Richard. (RICHARD turns impulsively and kisses him—then hurries out the screen door. MILLER stares after him—then says huskily) First time he's done that in years. I don't believe in kissing between fathers and sons after a certain age—seems mushy and silly—but that meant something! And I don't think we'll ever have to worry about his being safe—from himself.

—again And I guess no matter what life will do to him, he can take care of it now *(He sighs with satisfaction and, sitting down in his chair, begins to unlace his shoes)* My darned feet are giving me fits!

MRS MILLER *(laughing)* Why do you bother unlacing your shoes now, you big goose—when we're going right up to bed?

MILLER *(as if he hadn't thought of that before, stops)* Guess you're right *(Then getting to his feet—with a grin)* Mind if I don't say my prayers tonight, Essie? I'm certain God knows I'm too darned tired

MRS MILLER Don't talk that way It's real sinful *(She gets up—then laughing fondly)* If that isn't you all over! Always looking for an excuse to— You're worse than Tommy! But all right I suppose tonight you needn't You've had a hard day *(She puts her hand on the reading-lamp switch)* I'm going to turn out the light All ready?

MILLER Yep Let her go, Gallagher *(She turns out the lamp In the ensuing darkness the faint moonlight shines full in through the screen door Walking together toward the front parlor they stand full in it for a moment, looking out MILLER puts his arm around her He says in a low voice)* There he is—like a statue of Love's Young Dream *(Then he sighs and speaks with a gentle nostalgic melancholy)* What's it that Rubaiyat says

"Yet Ah, that Spring should
vanish with the Rose!
That Youth's sweet-scented
manuscript should close!"

(Then throwing off his melancholy, with a loving smile at her) Well, Spring isn't everything, is it, Essie? There's a lot to be said for Autumn That's got beauty, too And Winter—if you're together

MRS MILLER *(simply)* Yes, Nat *(She kisses him and they move quietly out of the moonlight, back into the darkness of the front parlor)*

CURTAIN

The Petrified Forest

BY ROBERT EMMET SHERWOOD

TO
MY MOTHER

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The Petrified Forest was first produced at the Broadhurst Theatre, New York City, by Gilbert Miller and Leslie Howard, in association with Arthur Hopkins, on January 7, 1935, and closed on June 29, 1935. Following is the original cast:

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| GRAMP MAPLE | Charles Dow Clark |
| BOZE HERTZLINGER | Frank Milan |
| A TELEGRAPH LINEMAN | Milo Boulton |
| ANOTHER LINEMAN | James Doody |
| JASON MAPLE | Walter Vonnegut |
| GABBY MAPLE | Peggy Conklin |
| PAULA | Esther Leeming |
| ALAN SQUIER | Leslie Howard |
| HERB | Robert Porterfield |
| MR. CHISHOLM | Robert Hudson |
| MRS. CHISHOLM | Blanche Sweet |
| JOSEPH | John Alexander |
| JACKIE | Ross Hertz |
| DUKE MANTER | Humphrey Bogart |
| RUBY | Tom Fadden |
| PYLES | Slim Thompson |
| LEGION COMMANDER | Aloysius Cunningham |
| ANOTHER LEGIONNAIRE | Guy Conradi |
| SHERIFF | Frank Tweddell |
| A DEPUTY | Eugene Keith |
| ANOTHER DEPUTY | Harry Sherwin |

Staged by Arthur Hopkins

Setting by Raymond Sovey

SCENE

The scene is the Black Mesa Bar-B-Q, a gas station and lunch room at a lonely crossroads in the eastern Arizona desert

The action begins late in the afternoon of an autumn day in 1934, and continues into the evening of the same day

THE PETRIFIED FOREST

ACT ONE

The scene of the entire play is the lunch room of the Black Mesa Filling Station and Bar-B-Q on the desert in Eastern Arizona

There is an atmosphere about the place of strenuous if not hearty welcome

At the upper right are double doors, with glass panels leading out to a covered porch. Off to the right, barely visible through these doors, are the red pumps of the filling station

Downstage left is a door leading to the bedrooms of the MAPLE family who own this establishment. Upstage left is a swinging door leading to the kitchen. Upstage is a lunch counter, with cash register, ketchup bottles, paper napkins, toothpicks, chewing-gum and Life-Saver rack, cigars, cigarettes, etc.

In the right wall are wide windows, through which may be seen the porch and, beyond it, the desert purpling in the sunset. At the left is a stove, with a high-backed rocking chair beside it.

There are three small square tables—downstage left, downstage right and center. There are three chairs at each table. At the right, along the wall, is a wooden bench.

The walls are of phony adobe. The window and door trimmings are painted a dark, burnt red. Above the windows is a sign, with the words, "BLACK MESA BAR-B-Q," worked in rustic letters. This formerly hung outside, but was replaced by a Neon sign, the green gleam of which will be evident later on when darkness descends.

The walls are decorated with advertisements of Rye Whiskey, Gas and Oil, the NRA, the TVA, the Red Cross, the American Legion, the Santa Fé R. R., Apache Beer, etc. On the wall is a framed photograph of General Pershing and below it an old service flag with one star. Prominently displayed is a crudely lettered sign that shouts "TIPPING IS UN-AMERICAN—KEEP YOUR CHANGE!"

At the table downstage right are two TELEGRAPH LINEMEN, eating hamburger and drinking coffee. Both are young. The FIRST is thin and explosive in speech, the SECOND beefy and calm.

Between them, and drawn back from the table, sits BOZE HERTZLINGER, a stalwart, bronzed young man, who wears dirty white canvas pants and a filthy football jersey, on the back of which is a patch with the number 42. He is lighting a cigarette.

At the left, in the rocking chair, sits GRAMP MAPLE—an old, old man. His eyes are watery and his vision blurred. His skin is like leather that has been dried by a lifetime under the desert sun and worn thin by constant rough usage. He holds a tattered pink copy of the Denver Post, but he is paying more attention to the talk of the LINEMEN than to the screaming headlines.

FIRST LINEMAN (*swallowing*) Certainly it's Revolution! And that's exactly what we got to come to, whether a lot of old fluffs back east like it or not

SECOND LINEMAN Yeah—and when it comes—how are you going to

FIRST LINEMAN When it comes, we're going to finally get some of that equality they talked about in the Declaration of Independence

SECOND LINEMAN Equality—hell! It's slavery And how will you like that?

FIRST LINEMAN What have we got now, I'd like to know? Do you call *this* freedom? (*He stows more food into his nimble mouth*)

BOZE Listen to me, kid In school we had to read up a lot on that cock-eyed system they got in Russia—and I'm here to tell you that if you were living over there you wouldn't be able to call your soul your own

FIRST LINEMAN And how do I know I've got a soul?

BOZE You're alive, aren't you?

FIRST LINEMAN Oh, sure—I'm alive I got a heart—I can hear it beating I got a stomach—I can hear it growling I got blood—I can see it, when I stuck myself with one of them God-damn splinters But where's this soul that everybody hollers about?

BOZE It's in your tongue, I guess (*He winks broadly at the* SECOND LINEMAN *A car is heard stopping off at the right*)

FIRST LINEMAN Yeah—and maybe they got it locked up in the safe

at the Postal Telegraph Company, along with the rest of their doubtful assets

(JASON MAPLE has come in from the upper right He is a dull, defeated man, of about forty, solemn, bespectacled, paunchy He wears a gray alpaca cap, and a gray suit In his lapel is an American Legion button)

JASON (to BOZE) Lady wants five gallons Get going

BOZE O K boss (*He pinches out the coal of his cigarette and places the butt behind his ear*)

JASON And you better keep on the alert out there so's customers don't have to wait See?

BOZE O K boss (*He goes out* The FIRST LINEMAN *laughs*)

FIRST LINEMAN And there's the guy who's here to tell me that in Russia you can't even call your soul your own

JASON You fellers want pie? (*His attitude toward the* FIRST LINEMAN *is not conspicuously amiable*)

SECOND LINEMAN Yeah

FIRST LINEMAN And another cuppa coffee (*JASON picks up their cups and goes to the door at the left*) Rugged individualism! Every man for himself! That's the kind of liberty we've been getting

JASON (*through the door at the left*) A couple of pies (*He goes to the coffee boiler on the counter to refill the two cups*)

SECOND LINEMAN What are you complaining about? You're eating

FIRST LINEMAN (*significantly*)
"Man cannot live by bread alone"

SECOND LINEMAN Who says he can't?

FIRST LINEMAN God says so! That's who

SECOND LINEMAN Oh—is God a Russian?

FIRST LINEMAN He certainly ain't with the Postal Telegraph
(*PAULA, the Mexican cook, comes in, bearing the pie* JASON lights a cigar)

JASON Take these (*JASON gives the cups to PAULA as she passes*)

FIRST LINEMAN Why do you suppose it is that Russia's got the whole world scared? It's because they're pushing ahead They're pioneering!

GRAMP They're what?

FIRST LINEMAN I said, they're pioneering They're opening up new territory—and for the benefit of all, not so's a few land grabbers can step in and take the profits after somebody else has done the real work Gracias (*This is addressed to PAULA, who has delivered the pie and is now removing the remnants of the hamburger*) Those engineers in Russia are building something new! That's where they've got it on us We ain't building—we're repairing Just like you and me What do we do—day after day? We climb up poles, and fix the wires, so that some broker in New York can telegraph in a split second to some guy in Los Angeles to tell him he's ruined

GRAMP Well, my friend—when you talk about pioneering—you're talking about something I can tell you a

few things about (*He has risen and is crossing to occupy the chair vacated by BOZE*)

JASON Shut up, Gramp

GRAMP I won't shut up

JASON I told you not to get into arguments with the guests

GRAMP Listen—I can tell these boys some things they'd be glad to hear. Wouldn't you, boys?

SECOND LINEMAN Sure! Go ahead, Pop Change the subject
(*Both LINEMEN are devouring the pie*)

GRAMP Listen, my friend I come down into this desert fifty-six years ago I come down from Virginia City by way of Salt Lake and Mesa Verde You had to be tough to cross this country in them days—Piyutes—Apaches—and plenty of white men with no love for their neighbors Yes, sir! I was in your same line of business—wire stringing I helped string the first line that run west out of Albuquerque, and we had one hell of a time doing it, too
(*BOZE comes in*)

BOZE Lady wants a pack of Camels

GRAMP Do you want to know who was the Governor of this territory in them days? Well, I'll tell you General Lew Wallace He wrote "Ben Hur" right there in the palace in Santa Fé He was a brave man and he had to be, because governing around here was dangerous work It meant killing or being killed

BOZE Attaboy, Mr Maple Tell 'em about the time you took a shot at Billy the Kid

(JASON hands BOZE the Camels and the change)

GRAMP I didn't take no shots at the Kid I had too God-damn much sense But he took a couple at me I'm practically the only man he ever missed, but he was only doing it in fun, so it couldn't hardly count

(GABBY MAPLE comes in from the left on the cue "he ever missed" She is young and pretty, with a certain amount of style about her Her principal distinguishing feature is an odd look of resentment in her large, dark eyes She carries a thin book, her forefinger marking the place She sits down at the table at the left and starts to read)

JASON Get on out with those Camels

BOZE O K boss (He goes out, with a knowing look at GABBY which she ignores)

FIRST LINEMAN Well, Pop, it's been very interesting, but I've got to be

GRAMP Wait a minute I was just going to tell you about the first message we ever sent over that line General Wallace dictated it and we sent it all the way through to Washington to President Hayes And do you want to know what it said? It said, "God Save the Republic!" That's what General Wallace told us to say—and he was a great author

FIRST LINEMAN (who has risen) You better send that same message through again, Pop—because the old republic's badly in need of assistance How much do we owe? (He has crossed to the lunch counter, the SECOND LINEMAN following)

JASON That'll be fifty-five cents apiece

GABBY What did they have?

JASON Hamburger special, pie, and two cups of coffee

GABBY All right (She puts down the book and picks up the pie plates and coffee mugs and goes out into the kitchen at the left The LINE-MEN are paying at the counter)

GRAMP Hope you'll call in again, boys I always enjoy talking to anybody in the telegraphing business

SECOND LINEMAN Maybe we will, Pop Never can tell where we'll be sent next

GRAMP That's right—you can't

JASON (as he shoves change across the counter) There's just one remark I'd like to pass to you, brother Just watch out how you talk about the United States of America

FIRST LINEMAN What do you mean?

JASON I mean simply this belittling our system of government, preaching revolution and destruction, and red propaganda—well, it isn't a very healthy occupation That's all

GRAMP I thought you said not to argue with the guests

JASON I'm only telling you, brother—for the sake of your own good

FIRST LINEMAN So it's unhealthy, eh! How do you think this government was started if it wasn't by revolution?

SECOND LINEMAN Come on, Nick We got to get going

FIRST LINEMAN Wait till he answers my question

JASON The American Revolution was fought to establish law and order But the object of your dirty red propaganda is to destroy it

FIRST LINEMAN And how much law and order have we got? Did you read about that massacre yesterday in Oklahoma City? What kind of law and order is that?

SECOND LINEMAN Listen, Nick I got a dame waiting up for me in Gallup and I

JASON If some of you Bolsheviks would quit preaching disrespect for law, it wouldn't be possible for criminals to

FIRST LINEMAN Yeah? Do you want to know something? They don't have crime in Russia And why? Because they've abolished the cause of crime They've abolished greed! And I'll tell you something else

SECOND LINEMAN I'm going (He starts out)

JASON You got your eats and there's your change Now kindly get out

FIRST LINEMAN (*pocketing his change*) O K Mr Tin-horn Patriot I only hope I'm around here when it happens I want to see you when you've joined the mob and started waving the red flag (He turns and starts out)

GRAMP 'Bye, boys

FIRST LINEMAN Good-bye, Pop (The LINEMEN go out)

GRAMP You never should get into arguments with a boy like that, Jason. You only make a fool out of yourself

JASON (*back of counter*) I'm sorry I didn't get his name, so's I could report him

GRAMP You tend to your own business, son, and stop fussing about other

JASON (*with surprising vehemence*) My own business! That's a fine thing to say to me What business have I got? Miserable little service station on the edge of nowhere's

GRAMP It's a living, ain't it?

JASON A living—yes—just barely But it's one hell of a life for a man that ought to be getting some place in the world

GRAMP Maybe it's all you're good for

JASON I know—that's what you think It's what you've always thought, since I was a boy What chance have I ever had to prove what I can do?

GRAMP You had a war, didn't you? Biggest war yet

JASON Yes—and you think I failed in that because I didn't come home with a lot of medals, and some German scalps hanging on my belt Well, they didn't hand out medals to us soldiers that drove trucks—even if we did get right up into the danger zone time and time again

GRAMP All right, son—all right! You could have enlisted in the infantry if you'd had a mind to

JASON (*hotly*) I enlisted in the branch of the service where my knowledge of mechanics could do the most good to my country And I've still got that knowledge And you know damned well it's your fault I don't get more scope for using it (*He has come out from behind the counter*)

GRAMP My fault?

JASON That's what I said Hanging on to this place when you can sell it for good money

GRAMP I don't have to sell if I don't want to

JASON Dana Trimble's renewed his offer Seven thousand dollars, and I know I can get him up to nine, maybe ten.

GRAMP What makes him think this property's worth that much?

JASON He knows perfectly well they're going to make this an interstate highway and run the bus route to El Paso through here

GRAMP All right—if it's good for him, it's good for us

JASON With seven thousand dollars I could buy a big piece of an Auto Camp on Redondo Boulevard in one of the best districts of Los Angeles I'd put in a Bar-B Q service and in a couple of years we'd *have* something

GRAMP Los Angeles! My God! You want to go to Los Angeles and Gabby wants to go to Europe Ain't they nobody around here that's satisfied to stay put?

JASON How about yourself? Were you ever satisfied to stay put, until you got so damned old you didn't have enough energy to move?

GRAMP Listen to me, son In my day, we had places to go—*new* places But, my God—Los Angeles
(GABBY comes in from the kitchen)

GABBY Paula's scared

GRAMP What's she scared of?

GABBY The Mexicans are saying that Mantee is headed this way

JASON He was headed for the border and he's over it by now—if the Texas Rangers haven't got him

GRAMP They won't get him Have you seen his picture? Straight black hair Got Injun blood He'll fool 'em

JASON (*importantly*) You can't fool all the people all the time (*He turns to go*) Watch the counter, will you, Gabby? I got to get dressed

GRAMP Dressed? For what?

JASON Legion meeting

GABBY What time will you be home, Dad?

JASON About ten, I guess—maybe later There's a lot of important business coming up (*He addresses GRAMP, with some defiance*) And I'm going to make some inquiries about those telegraph men And if I can locate 'em, that Bolshevik will be out of a job and then he can go look for work pioneering in Russia

GABBY What'll you do—blow a bugle and turn the whole God-damn Legion loose on him?

JASON. Will you kindly control your language?

GABBY I'll talk the only language I understand

GRAMP You'll never get Gabby to talk respectable Never in all this world

JASON Well, I only hope some day my own daughter will learn to cultivate a little respect for the things I stand for Maybe the time will come when you'll be thankful your father fought for his country *(He goes out at the left)*

GABBY *(going behind the counter)* What did that telegraph man say that got Dad in such a stew?

GRAMP I don't know what he said—something about Russia and pioneering But there's a lot in it, whatever it was The trouble with this country is, it's got settled It's camped down in the bed of a dried-up river, and whenever anybody says, "Let's get the hell out of here," all the rest start to holler, "If we move a step the Injuns'll get us" Well—say—if we'd been that way in my time, I'd like to know how this country'd ever have got rich enough to be able to support the American Legion *(Two toots from an auto horn are heard)* Say! There's the mail

(With surprising alacrity, GRAMP jumps up and hurries out GABBY has poured herself a cup of coffee and brought it down to the table at the left She sits down, sips the coffee, opens her book, and reads After a moment BOZE comes in, sees that she is alone, and closes the door behind him GABBY looks up, sees who it is, indicates indifference, and resumes reading BOZE comes up behind her,

leans over and kisses the back of her neck She brushes him off as though he were a fly)

GABBY *(without vehemence)* Cut it out

(BOZE grins, draws up a chair, and sits down close to her, his hefty forearms resting on the table)

BOZE Not mad, are you, Gabby?

GABBY Where's Gramp?

BOZE He's out talking to the postman Don't worry about him

GABBY I wasn't worrying

BOZE Don't you like me, honey sweet?

GABBY No—not very much

BOZE O K I'll forgive you—seeing as I've been here only a little while and I haven't had much chance to go into my act But when I do—you're going to change your attitude awful fast *(She fails to comment on this threat He is silent for a moment, his jaws confidently chewing on a small piece of gum)* What's that you're reading?

GABBY You wouldn't like it

BOZE How do you know how I feel about things? Can I look?

GABBY Sure Go ahead and look *(He takes the opened book and examines it)*

BOZE Hah—poems *(He reads)*

"The shapely slender shoulders small,
Long arms, hands wrought in glorious wise,

Round little breasts, the hips
withal
High, full of flesh, not scant of
size,
Fit for all amorous mas-
teries "

(*He whistles through his teeth*) Say!
That's kind of pash! (*She snatches
the book away from him*) So that's
the kind of stuff you read Well,
honey, I'm not a bit surprised I've
been suspecting all along that all you
needed was a little encouragement
(*She looks at him, curiously, with a
mixture of contempt and some slight
interest*) And I don't wonder that in
a God-forsaken place like this you'd
have to get it out of poetry

GABBY (*defensive*) It's great poetry!

BOZE Certainly it's great But I can
think of something a whole lot bet-
ter Look at me, honey (*She
looks at him*) I'm not so terrible look-
ing, am I?

GABBY Why do you wear that locket
around your neck?

BOZE (*laughing*) Locket!

GABBY It makes you look like a sissy

BOZE I've been waiting for you to
notice that That was my father's
watch chain My mother gave it to
me when I graduated I'd like you to
know my mother She lives in Grants
Pass, Oregon, and she could tell you
some pretty nice things about me
But wait till you see what's on the
end (*He draws the chain out and
displays a gold football*) It's a gold
football—solid gold! I got that for
intercepting a pass and running sixty-
eight yards for a touchdown

GABBY What was your school?

BOZE Nevada Tech If I'd been with
Princeton or Minnesota or any of
those big clubs, I'd have been All-
American. Wait till I show you some-
thing (*He produces a billfold from
his hip pocket and extracts there-
from a frequently folded clipping*)
That's from Sid Ziff's column in the
Los Angeles Herald He saw me play
against Loyola Listen to what he
says "Tip to the pigskin fraternity
When pondering your All-American
selections for this current Anno
Domini, just mull over the name of
Boze Hertzlinger of Nevada Tech
Playing with an admittedly minor
league club, and protected by inter-
ference of cellophane strength
Hertzlinger managed to remind some
of us observers of the Illini Phantom
himself" Do you know who the
Illini Phantom was? Red Grang-
(*He folds up the clipping and re-
stores it to his pocket*) That's just a
sample of the kind of notices I got
I could show you dozens more like it

GABBY You think a hell of a lot of
yourself, don't you?

BOZE (*disarmingly*) Who wouldn't,
in my position?

GABBY Why do you have to work in
a filling station?

BOZE Well—that's a point that I don't
know if I could explain so's you'd
understand it I could be making
good money in a lot of ways right
now—engineering, coaching, the in-
surance game—lots of ways But—I
just can't be tied down—not yet I've
got an itch inside here that keeps me
on the move—chasing the rainbow

GABBY Do you ever expect to catch
it?

BOZE I'll catch it all right I'll twist its tail, and make it do tricks . Maybe I'm kind of close to it right now

GABBY You'd better look some place else There aren't any rainbows around Black Mesa

BOZE I wouldn't bet on that You know, Gabby—you're a queer kid Sometimes you seem too young to know anything And then—sometimes—you seem like God's grandmother And reading that pash poetry That gives me an idea

GABBY An idea of what?

BOZE Oh—it's easy to tell when a girl's ready for love

GABBY How do you tell that, Boze?

BOZE Well—one pretty sure way is when she starts calling me by my own name for the first time And another way is how I feel myself It takes two to make a radio program, you know—the one that's sending, and the one that's receiving And when I'm with a girl that's cute and appealing, with big, soft eyes—well—I can feel sort of electric waves running all through me—and I can be pretty sure she's doing some broadcasting, whether she knows it or not

GABBY Have you got a program coming in now?

BOZE Listen— It's like the hottest torch song that ever was sung Can't you kind of hear it, honey? (*She looks away from him, but says nothing He reaches out and takes hold of her hand, entwining his fingers with hers*) You can call me a sap if you want to, Gabby—but I guess I'm

falling in love with you I'm getting so I want you more than is good for me

GABBY (*looking at him, levelly*) Have you ever been in love before?

BOZE (*scornfully*) No!

GABBY Have you ever *said* you were?

BOZE Sure—plenty of times

GABBY Did they believe you?

BOZE (*amused*) Certainly they did And I'll tell you why it's because they were all dumb! But that's just where you're different I couldn't fool you, Gabby

GABBY I'm smart, am I?

BOZE Too smart—for most men You'd catch on to 'em But that's what I want Because the more you see into me, the better you're going to like me (*With his free hand, he takes hold of her chin*)

GABBY You'd better look out, if you want to hold on to your job Dad might come in and he doesn't like to have the help making passes at me

BOZE That wouldn't bother me, honey sweet There are plenty more jobs for anyone with the ambition I've got But there aren't plenty more girls like you (*He leans over and kisses her*) You're going to love me, Gabby You're going to love me a lot

GABBY Look out! There's someone

BOZE (*unconcerned*) We'll talk about it some more later

(ALAN SQUIER has appeared in the doorway, and, seeing that he has interrupted some amour, has paused to give them time to break. He is a thin, wan, vague man of about thirty-five. He wears a brown felt hat, brown tweed coat and gray flannel trousers—which came originally but much too long ago from the best Saville Row tailors. He is shabby and dusty but there is about him a sort of after-glow of elegance. There is something about him—and it is impossible in a stage direction to say just what it is—that brings to mind the ugly word "condemned." He carries a heavy walking stick and a rucksack is slung over his shoulders. He is diffident in manner, ultra-polite and soft spoken, his accent is that of an Anglicized American.)

SQUIER Good evening

BOZE (cordially) Good evening! What can we do for you?

SQUIER Can I order something to eat?

BOZE Why, certainly. Miss Maple will take care of you. (While SQUIER is taking off his rucksack and hat, and putting them on the bench at the right, BOZE turns to GABBY and speaks in a low tone.) Your father going into town?

GABBY Yes. (She is taking a menu card to the table at the center.)

BOZE (significantly) O K. (He goes out.)

GABBY Will you sit down here, sir?

SQUIER Thanks. (He sits. She hands him the menu card.)

GABBY Driven far?

SQUIER I've been walking

GABBY Do you live around here?

SQUIER No. My last host of the road reached his own ranch, about ten miles back, and didn't ask me in. I had to continue on foot. It's wonderful what progress you can make just by doing this. (He jerks his thumb and looks at the menu.) "Today's Special." Just what is a Bar-B-Q?

GABBY Well—here it's hamburger sandwich with vegetables on the side. It's always "Today's Special." But it's pretty good.

SQUIER I want it. But first I'd like some of that cream of corn soup, and some beer, and—I'll order the dessert later.

GABBY O K. (She takes the menu.)

SQUIER Another question. Where am I?

GABBY This place is called Black Mesa, but there's nothing else here. Where were you planning to go?

SQUIER My plans have been uncertain.

GABBY You mean, you were just bumming along?

SQUIER Call it gipsying. I had a vague idea that I'd like to see the Pacific Ocean, and perhaps drown in it. But that depends.

GABBY Where did you come from?

SQUIER Quite a long way, Miss Maple. Is that the name?

GABBY (*smiling*) Yes—that's it Are you English?

SQUIER No You might call me an American once removed But—if you don't mind—

GABBY The soup'll be right in The washroom's through there, on your left, if you want it (*She indicates the door at the left*)

SQUIER Thank you
(GABBY goes out at the left SQUIER rises He sees the book of verse, picks it up and looks at it, wonderingly The door at the left opens and JASON comes out, resplendent in the uniform of his Legion post It is horizon blue, with white Sam Browne belt and pistol holster SQUIER looks at JASON with amazement)

JASON Good evening

SQUIER Good evening

JASON Anyone take your order?

SQUIER Yes—a charming young lady

JASON That's my daughter (*He says this with a note of warning, as much as to add "And don't try to get fresh"*)
JASON crosses to the cash register, punches the "No Sale," and extracts five silver dollars from the till He then reaches under the counter, takes out a revolver, breaks it to make sure it's loaded, and rubs it with a cloth SQUIER has one more puzzled look at him, then goes out at the left GRAMP comes in from the upper right, bearing a fresh copy of the Denver Post)

GRAMP (*at the end of the counter*) I was just talking to Roy Greeley and he says in town they're all certain

that Mantee outfit is headed here Look! They got the whole story here in The Post Oklahoma City Massacre! Six killed—four wounded—two not expected to live (JASON glances at the paper) The sheriff's got all his deputies out patrolling the roads They think there's sure going to be some killing around here

JASON Well—if there is—we can't trust that sheriff to do a damn thing We'll turn out the Legion

GRAMP You would?

JASON Certainly! That's what we're there for (*He thrusts the revolver in the holster of his Sam Browne belt, goes to the kitchen door, and calls through it "Gabby!"*)

GABBY'S VOICE Yes?

JASON I'm leaving now And I—I took five bucks If anything delays me getting back, I'll phone

GABBY'S VOICE O K

JASON Don't forget to light the Neon sign when it gets dark

GABBY'S VOICE I won't
(*He shuts the kitchen door and crosses up front of the counter*)

GRAMP Well, by God, you'd better not try to do any shooting in that get-up I never seed a better target

JASON You needn't be afraid about me
(GABBY comes in with the soup)

GRAMP I ain't afraid But I would be if I was you

GABBY How much did you say you took?

JASON. Five bucks

GABBY What do you need all that for?

JASON Just in case of emergency (*He decides to resent all this interference*) By God, between the two of you, you'd think I wasn't fit to be trusted with money or ideas or anything But I'm here to tell you, both of you

GABBY (*putting the soup on the table*) What, Dad?

JASON Oh, never mind (*He goes out GABBY goes to the counter, opens a bottle of beer, and takes it to the centre table*)

GRAMP (*while she is about this*) It's too bad they didn't wear a uniform like that when they fit the Germans They wouldn't none of 'em have come home Who's that food for?

GABBY Customer He's in the wash-room, I guess

GRAMP Is it that young feller that walked in with a little pack on his back? (*He goes to his rocking chair at the left*)

GABBY Yes—that's the one

GRAMP Looked to me like one of them things you see up around Taos (*He sits down*) Hey, Gabby, how about letting your poor, weary old grandfather have a little drink now?

GABBY No

GRAMP. Aw—come on I ain't got so long to live
(*SQUIER comes in from the left*)

GABBY You can have one before you go to bed, and that's all (*She goes out through the kitchen door*)

GRAMP Your soup's waiting for you, my friend

SQUIER Thank you

GRAMP Looks good, too

SQUIER Yes It looks fine (*SQUIER sits down and starts to eat, ravenously GRAMP decides that the Denver Post will serve as a conversation opener He crosses to SQUIER's table*)

GRAMP Like to see a picture of that Duke Mantee? (*He holds out the newspaper SQUIER looks at the clamorous headlines*)

SQUIER My God! Six killed Did he do all that?

GRAMP Him and his friends did, when they sprung him from the law Fine lot of sheriffs they must have there in Oklahoma City—letting themselves get knocked over right out in front of the Court House

SQUIER (*still eating*) He doesn't look very vicious, does he?

GRAMP (*sitting down*) Well—I'll tell you, you can't tell a killer from his picture, except by his chin That's a funny thing about a killer—always holds his chin in Ever notice that?

SQUIER (*buttering some bread*) I don't think I've ever seen a killer

GRAMP I have Plenty of 'em Ever hear of Billy the Kid?

SQUIER Yes, indeed

GRAMP I knowed him well, down in the Pecos country (*Proudly*) He took a couple of shots at me, once

SQUIER I congratulate you on still being with us

GRAMP Well—it was kind of dark, and he'd had a few—and, besides, I don't think he really meant to do me any real harm. Just wanted to scare the pants off of me

SQUIER Did he do it?

GRAMP Naw—I seed he was just having some fun. So I said to him "Kid—you're drunk!" And he said, "What makes you think that?" He was always soft-spoken. And I said "Because you missed me!" Well, sir—he had to laugh. You're kind of hongry, aren't you?

SQUIER Yes. You can go just so long without food.

GRAMP Been having some bad luck?

SQUIER Yes

GRAMPS Well—no disgrace in that these days. What line of work you in?

SQUIER None, just now. I have been, at times, a writer.

GRAMP A writer, eh? That's a funny thing.

SQUIER (*laughing silently*) Yes—it is.

GRAMP I knew the greatest writer that ever lived. Sam Clemens. Ever hear of him?

SQUIER (*trying hard to think*) Let me see . . .

GRAMP Well, did you ever hear of Mark Twain?

SQUIER Oh, *yes!*

GRAMP Same feller!

SQUIER Really?

(*GABBY comes in with "Today's Special," which she puts on the table*)

GRAMP Yes, sir. I knew him when I was a boy up in Virginia City. He was writing comical pieces for the paper there—The Enterprise—and he was the best God-damn liar I ever seed, and I've seed plenty. He used to say he did his writing on the principle that his readers wanted everything but the truth, so that's what he give 'em. (*GABBY is on the way out*) Are you a famous writer?

(*At the kitchen door, GABBY turns to look at SQUIER, then goes out*)

SQUIER No.

GRAMP Maybe you're just modest. What's your name?

SQUIER Alan Squier.

GRAMP Well, maybe you are famous, for all I'd know. I don't get to do much reading, outside of the head lines. Eyes have gone back on me. But when I was your age, I could hit a running jack rabbit at fifty paces.

GABBY (*coming in*) Your supper's ready, Gramp.

GRAMP And I'm ready for it. Got me hongry, watching him eat. (*He has risen*) Pleased to have met you, Mr. Squier.

SQUIER Pleased to have met you, sir.

GRAMP Yes, sir Thank you, sir (He goes out) *and started to go* Please don't go (She pauses and turns)

GABBY Like the soup?

SQUIER (from the heart) It was glorious!

GABBY Want some coffee?

SQUIER Will it mix with the beer?

GABBY Oh, sure Coffee will mix with anything (She goes to the counter to get his coffee)

SQUIER That's a charming old gentleman Your grandfather?

GABBY Yes

SQUIER He told me he'd been missed by Billy the Kid

GABBY He tells everybody about that Poor Gramp You get terribly sick of him after a while (She has brought down the coffee) Did I hear him say you're a writer?

SQUIER (humbly) Yes

GABBY I haven't met many writers—except Sidney Wenzell Ever heard of him?

SQUIER That's not Mark Twain, is it?

GABBY No! Sidney Wenzell—he's with Warner Brothers He stopped here once, when he was driving out to the Coast He said I ought to go to Hollywood, and to be sure and look him up But—what the hell! They never mean it

SQUIER No! They never mean a thing (She has picked up her book

GABBY Something else you want? We got pie and layer cake

SQUIER No I—I'd like to talk to you Please sit down

GABBY All right (She sits down, across from him, at the center table SQUIER eats rapidly, mechanically, during the subsequent dialogue, stowing the food away as he talks and listens)

SQUIER I suppose you want to go into the movies?

GABBY (scornfully) God, no!

SQUIER But—I thought every beautiful girl had her heart set on Hollywood

GABBY That's just it It's too common I want to go to Bourges (She fails to soften the "G")

SQUIER Where?

GABBY Bourges—in France You'd never guess it, but that's where I came from

SQUIER You're not French?

GABBY Partly I was born in Bourges—but I left it almost before I was able to walk, so all I know about it is from the picture postcards my mother sends me They got a cathedral there

SQUIER Your mother still lives there?

GABBY Yes Dad brought us back here after the war Mother stuck it out in this desert for a couple of

years, and then she packed up and went back to Bourges. We've never seen her since. Some people seem to think it was cruel of her to leave me. But what could she do? She didn't have any money to bring me up. She just couldn't live here—and you can't blame her for that. Do you think she was cruel?

SQUIER Not if you don't, Miss Maple.

GABBY Well—I *don't*. She's tried lots of times to get me over there to see her—but Dad won't allow it. She got a divorce and married a Frenchman that's got a bookstore. Mother was always a great reader, so I guess it's nice for her. She's got three more kids. Just think of that! I've got a half-brother and half-sisters that can't speak a word of English. I'd sure like to see them.

SQUIER Can you speak French?

GABBY Only what you learn in high school—like *table* for "table" (*She takes a photograph from the book*). Look—there's my mother's picture. That was just before she married Dad. She had her picture taken smelling a rose.

SQUIER She's lovely! And I can see the resemblance.

GABBY It's hard to imagine her being married to Dad, isn't it? But I guess he looked all right in his American uniform. Mother used to send me a book every year for my birthday, but they were all in French and I couldn't read them. So last year I wrote and asked if she'd mind sending me one in English, and she sent me this one. It's the Poems of François Villon. Ever read it?

SQUIER Yes.

GABBY It's wonderful poetry. She wrote in it "*à ma chère petite Gabrielle*." That means "To my dear little Gabrielle." She gave me that name. It's about the only French thing I've got.

SQUIER Gabrielle. It's a beautiful name.

GABBY Wouldn't you know it would get changed into "Gabby" by these ignorant bastards around here? I guess you think I use terrible language.

SQUIER Oh, no! It—it's picturesque.

GABBY Well—it suits this kind of country.

SQUIER You share your mother's opinion of the desert? (*She nods*). But you can find solace in the Poems of François Villon.

GABBY Yes. They get the stink of the gasoline and the hamburger out of my system.

SQUIER Would you like to read me one of those poems, Gabrielle?

GABBY You mean now?

SQUIER Yes. While I'm finishing "Today's Special."

GABBY O K. I'll read you the one I like best. He wrote it about a friend of his who was getting married. (*She reads, with marked but inept emphasis*).

"At daybreak, when the falcon claps
his wings
No whit for grief, but noble heart
held high

With loud glad noise he stirs him-
self and springs,
And takes his meat and toward
his lure draws nigh,
Such good I wish you! Yea, and
heartily
I'm fired with hope of true love's
need to get,
Knowing Love writes it in his
book, for why,
This is the end for which we twain
are met "

Did you ever see a falcon?

SQUIER Yes

GABBY What does it look like?

SQUIER Not very pleasant Like a
hawk Go on, Gabrielle

GABBY (*resuming reading*)

"Mine own heart's lady with no gain-
sayings
You shall be always till I die,
And in my right against all bitter
things
Sweet laurel with fresh rose its
force shall try,
Seeing reason wills not that I cast
love by
Nor here with reason shall I chide
and fret

(*She closes the book and recites*)

Nor cease to serve, but serve
more constantly,
This is the end for which we twain
are met "

(*She looks at him, and he at her
Then he resumes his attack on the
hamburger*) You know—that's won-
derful stuff But that's the way the
French people are they can under-
stand everything—like life, and love

—and death—and they can enjoy it,
or laugh at it, depending on how they
feel

SQUIER And that's why you want to
go to France—for understanding

GABBY I will go there! When Gramp
dies, we can sell this place Dad's
going to take his share and move to
Los Angeles, so that he can join a
really big Legion post and get to be
a political power But I'm going to
spend my part of the money on a
trip to Bourges, where there's some-
thing beautiful to look at, and wine,
and dancing in the streets

SQUIER If I were you—I'd stay here,
Gabrielle, and avoid disappointment

GABBY What makes you think I'd be
disappointed?

SQUIER I've been to France

GABBY You were there in the war?

SQUIER No, I missed that But I
lived there for eight years, through
seventeen changes of government

GABBY What were you doing—writ-
ing books?

SQUIER No—planning to write books
You know what a gigolo is?

GABBY Were you one of those? (*He
nods*) You danced with women for
money?

SQUIER Oh lord, no! I never was a
good enough dancer for that I—I
married

GABBY Oh

SQUIER Please don't think too ill of
me I once actually wrote a book

GABBY What was it—fiction?

SQUIER In a sense It was a novel about the bleak, glacier-stripped hills of my native New England I was twenty-two when I wrote it, and it was very, very stark It sold slightly over six hundred copies It cost the publisher quite a lot of money, and it also cost him his wife You see, she divorced him and married me She had faith in me, and she had the chance to display it, because her husband was very generous in the financial settlement I suppose he had faith in me, too She saw in me a major artist, profound, but inarticulate She believed that all I needed was background, and she gave it to me—with southern exposure and a fine view of the Mediterranean That was considered the thing to do in the period that followed Scott Fitzgerald For eight years I reclined there, on the Riviera, on my background—and I waited for the major artist to step forth and say something of enduring importance He preferred to remain inarticulate

GABBY And you've left your wife, now?

SQUIER Yes

GABBY I'm glad you did

SQUIER I left her at her suggestion She has taken up with a Brazilian painter—also a major artist There was nothing for me to do but travel I decided to go forth and discover America—and I've gone this far on my journey, thanks to the power of the thumb (He gestures with his thumb)

GABBY What were you looking for?

SQUIER Well—that's rather hard to say I—I suppose I've been looking for something to believe in I've been hoping to find something that's worth living for—and dying for

GABBY What have you found?

SQUIER Nothing so interesting as an old man who was missed by Billy the Kid, and a fair young lady who reads Villon

GABBY (after a pause) Well—I do other things that'd surprise you

SQUIER I'm sure you do

GABBY I wouldn't tell this to everybody—but you—well, you're kind of

SQUIER I'm kind of nobody What is it, Gabrielle?

GABBY I paint pictures

SQUIER Are they any good?

GABBY Hell, no!

SQUIER Could I see them?

GABBY Oh—I never let people look at them I'd only get kidded They're kind of crazy pictures

SQUIER All the better Please let me see them

GABBY You know anything about Art?

SQUIER Oh—I've studied the whole cycle—right from El Greco through Burne Jones and back to El Greco again Perhaps you're another genius. Perhaps it's my mission to introduce you to posternity

GABBY Are you kidding me?

SQUIER No Gabrielle. I've never kidded anybody outside of myself
(*The voice of HERB, a cowboy, is heard offstage*)

GABBY All right But you've got to promise not to tell anybody

SQUIER My word of honor—for all it's worth
(GABBY goes out)

HERB'S VOICE Sure, Boze I know you've got all the inside dope But I'll bet you four bits he flattens him inside of five rounds

BOZE Four bits to what?

HERB No—I ain't giving you no odds

BOZE All right!

HERB All right!
(*HERB has come in during this cheerful challenge He wears a big black hat, gray shirt and blue overalls, and carries a gunnysack*)

HERB (*genially, to SQUIER*) How de do

SQUIER (*still eating*) Good evening

HERB Where's Gab?

SQUIER She'll be back in a moment
(*HERB has crossed to the counter*)

HERB They sure give you a good meal here, don't they?

SQUIER Superb!

HERB Well—I'll tell you Jason Maple's got a natural-born gift for

hotel keeping, and by God I think Gabby's better at it than he is The only trouble with 'em is, they ain't got a hotel (*He has to laugh at that*)

SQUIER Yes—that does restrict the full play of their talents

(GABBY comes in with a sheaf of watercolor paintings of comparatively small size but of virulent color)

HERB Hi, Gab

GABBY Hi, Herb
(*Nervously she puts the pictures face down on the table by SQUIER She cautions him with a look not to display them to HERB But during the subsequent dialogue, SQUIER peek at them with a certain amount of neck-stroking bewilderment*)

HERB Got any moon?

GABBY Sure

HERB How much you asking for it?

GABBY A dollar fifty a bottle

HERB Holy Cow! Well—give us a bottle, and half a dozen bottles of beer

GABBY You fellers going to get drunk to-night? (*She has gone to the counter to fill the order*)

HERB (*leaning on the counter*) By God—that's the way it looks Sheriff called up the old man and asked if we could be spared for patrolling the roads and the old man says sure and the sheriff says he'll come out and swear us in, but he ain't come yet, so we got a poker game started up the road a piece and thought we might as well have something to go along with it

GABBY. There you are, Herb That'll be two thirty

HERB *All I got's two bucks (He tenders it)* Will you trust me for the thirty cents?

GABBY I'll take back two bottles of beer That'll make it even

HERB *(as he dumps the bottles into the gunnysack)* Cosh—liquor sure is getting expensive these days Well—I guess we got enough here seeing as there's only three of us

GABBY How you going to play poker if you haven't got any more money?

HERB Oh, we got a book So long, Gabby

GABBY So long, Herb *(He goes out GABBY rings up the \$2.00 in the cash register and comes down She is eager to know how SQUIER feels about her paintings, but she is trying desperately hard to be offhand about it)* They're terrible, aren't they?
(SQUIER is now examining the pictures with rapt attention)

SQUIER I—I don't know Is—this a portrait of someone?

GABBY That's Paula, our Mexican cook She's the only one knows I ever try to do that junk It isn't much of a likeness.

SQUIER I'm sure it wasn't intended to be *(He picks up another picture)* Certainly no critic could condemn you for being photographic

GABBY This is the one I like best *(SQUIER looks at it)* I wanted to show how the storm clouds look when they roll down from the mountains

SQUIER. What made you paint in this strange manner?

GABBY It's—just the way I feel

SQUIER You're a product of the ultimate French school, all right

GABBY *(pleased)* You think so?

SQUIER These are somewhat in the Dufy manner—and yet—a lot less conventional

GABBY But are they any good?

SQUIER I tell you, Gabrielle—I can't say I'm tremendously impressed, and also, bewildered

GABBY I'll bet I could improve if I could get to France You know, they've got some of the finest art schools in the world there And they've got beautiful things to paint, too—flowers, and castles and rivers But here in this desert—it's just the same thing over and over again

SQUIER Don't you realize—there are probably thousands of artists in France to-day who are saying, "I'd find a really big theme for my canvas if I could only get out to Arizona"

GABBY I know A lot of people come out here and go crazy about the desert They say it's full of mystery, and it's haunted, and all that Well—maybe it is But there's something in me that makes me want something different

SQUIER *(looking at her)* I know there's something in you I wish I could figure out what it is

GABBY Listen—you've been in France What are they like there?

SQUIER. Well—it's rather difficult to render a sweeping judgment

GABBY I've always imagined they must all be like Villon—gay, reckless, poetic

SQUIER No—I shouldn't call them any of those things Especially, not reckless!

GABBY But they're always having a good time, aren't they?

SQUIER Not invariably

GABBY Maybe I know them better than you do, because it's in my blood Sometimes I can feel as though I were sparkling all over, and I don't care what happens—I want to go out and do something that's absolutely crazy—and marvelous But then the American part of me speaks up and spoils everything It makes me go to work and figure out a lot of dull accounts, so many pounds of coffee, so many frankfurters, so many rolls

SQUIER You keep the accounts correctly?

GABBY If I didn't, this place would be bankrupt

SQUIER Then that's the French part of you The sparkle must be 100% American Would you like to marry a Frenchman?

GABBY I don't want to marry anybody I want to always be free!

SQUIER How about that stalwart youth out there in the football jersey?

GABBY What makes you think I'd take any notice of him?

SQUIER Well—when I came in here

GABBY Oh, sure He was kissing me. That's nothing

SQUIER Perhaps But there's always the chance of development

GABBY He's trying to make me. That's all he wants

SQUIER Do you think he'll succeed?

GABBY I haven't decided yet It would be experience, and that's what I need Do you think I ought to give in?

SQUIER Don't ask me, Gabrielle Let your French blood guide you It's infallible, in matters like that

GABBY But you ought to know *something* You've seen a lot, and you've written a book, and you've been married

SQUIER I don't know anything You see—the trouble with me is, I belong to a vanishing race I'm one of the intellectuals

GABBY That means you've got brains I can see you have

SQUIER Yes—brains without purpose Noise without sound Shape without substance Have you ever read *The Hollow Men*? (*She shakes her head*) Don't It's discouraging, because it's true It refers to the intellectuals, who thought they'd conquered Nature They dammed it up, and used its waters to irrigate the wastelands They built streamlined monstrosities to penetrate its resistance They wrapped it up in cellophane and sold it to drugstores They

were so certain they had it subdued
And now—do you realize what it is
that is causing world chaos?

GABBY No

SQUIER Well, I'm probably the only
living person who can tell you
It's Nature hitting back Not with
the old weapons—floods, plagues,
holocausts We can neutralize them
She's fighting back with strange in-
struments called neuroses She's de-
liberately afflicting mankind with the
jitters Nature is proving that she
can't be beaten—not by the likes of
us She's taking the world away from
the intellectuals and giving it back to
the apes Forgive me, Gabrielle

I can't tell you what a luxury
it is to have some one to talk to
But don't listen to me I was born in
1901, the year Victoria died I was
just too late for the Great War—and
too soon for the revolution You're
a war baby You may be an entirely
different species, for all I know You
can easily be one of Nature's own
children, and therefore able to un-
derstand her, and laugh at her—or
enjoy her—depending on how you
feel You're the only one who can say
whether or not you should yield to
the ardors of Number 42 out there
(He finishes his glass of beer) That
beer is excellent

GABBY It's made in Phoenix (She
is looking at him intently) You know
—you talk like a God-damn fool

SQUIER I know it (He is taking out
the last of his cigarettes)

GABBY No wonder your wife kicked
you out And no wonder she
fell for you in the first place
(He pauses in the act of lighting his
cigarette)

SQUIER That sounds alarmingly like
a compliment

GABBY It is a compliment What did
you say your name was?

SQUIER Alan Squier I've been call-
ing you Gabrielle, so you'd better

GABBY Where are you going from
here, Alan?

SQUIER That depends on where this
road leads

GABBY It leads to the petrified forest

SQUIER What's that?

GABBY Oh—just a lot of dead old
trees in the desert, that have turned
to stone

SQUIER The petrified forest! A sur-
able haven for me Perhaps that's
what I'm destined for—to make an in-
teresting fossil for future study
Homo Semi-Americanus—a specimen
of the in-between age

GABBY I was just thinking—I'd like
to go to France with you
(He looks at her, sharply—then looks
sharply away)

SQUIER Oh, no, Gabrielle! I could
never retrace my footsteps

GABBY You mean you haven't
enough money?

SQUIER Even that is an understatement

GABBY I haven't enough, either—yet
But I can do this as well as you can.
(She gestures with her thumb)

SQUIER We'd reach a point, on the Atlantic Coast, where even that gesture would be unavailing

GABBY You know, Alan—there's something about you that's very appealing

SQUIER Appealing! Yes—that's been my downfall! It was that very quality which led me into the gigolo trade.

GABBY Why wouldn't you like to be a gigolo for me?

SQUIER For one very good reason you couldn't afford it

GABBY But I will be able to afford it

SQUIER On your share of this property? (He shakes his head)

GABBY Listen—I've got more than that coming to me. Do you know how much Gramp has got salted away in the bank in Santa Fé? Twenty-two thousand dollars! He had every cent of it in gold and silver in the safety vaults. Why—we didn't even know about it until the government passed a law against hoarding and they printed his name in the papers. It's in Liberty Bonds now, and it's all willed to me. I guess we could travel pretty far on that, couldn't we?

SQUIER Too far

GABBY We could go to France, and you'd show me everything, all the cathedrals and the art—and explain everything. And you wouldn't have to marry me, Alan. We'd just live in sin and have one hell of a time

SQUIER That's a startling proposal, Gabrielle. I hadn't expected to receive anything like that in *this desert*

GABBY We'd have to wait—maybe years. But I could have Boze fired and give you the job tending the gas station

SQUIER You think you'd like to have me for a companion?

GABBY I know I would. And I don't make mistakes. You're no ape-man, Alan—but you're lovable

SQUIER Lovable! The next grade be low appealing

GABBY Wouldn't you like to be loved by me?

SQUIER (looking at her intently) Yes, Gabrielle. I should like to be loved by you

GABBY You think I'm attractive?

SQUIER There are better words than that for what you are

GABBY Then why don't we at least make a start at it? You haven't got anything else to do

SQUIER (smiling) No—that's just it. You couldn't live very long with a man who had nothing else to do but worship you. That's a dull kind of love, Gabrielle. It's the kind of love that makes people old, too soon. (He rises.) But—I thank you for the suggestion. You've opened up a new channel of my imagination which will be pleasant to explore during my lonely wanderings. I'll think of the chimes of Bourges—and you—and sin

GABBY. You're going now?

SQUIER Yes. And I shall continue going until either I drop or that major

artist emerges to announce his message to posterity

GABBY (*rising*) Well—I can't stop you

SQUIER No, Gabrielle, you can't But you can do me one great favor, before I go Would you mind very much if I kissed you good-bye? (*GABBY looks at him levelly*)

GABBY No I wouldn't mind

SQUIER You'd understand that it would be nothing more

GABBY I'd understand It'd be just a kiss—that's all

SQUIER That's absolutely all (*He kisses her BOZE is seen through the glass of the doorway He bursts the door open*)

BOZE Ah-hah! So that's what's been going on in here! Necking, huh! (*He strides up to SQUIER and seizes him by the shoulder*) Who the hell are you?

GABBY Lay off him, Boze (*She has seized her paintings*)

BOZE Just because she's cute and sweet you thought you could get fresh, huh!

GABBY He didn't get fresh! He only wanted to kiss me good-bye

SQUIER Yes—the impulse is rather hard to explain—but I

BOZE You needn't wait to explain it Pay your check and get out

SQUIER Very well How much do I owe, Miss Maple?

GABBY Thirty cents

BOZE Is that all he ate? (*He looks down at the table at the remains of SQUIER's meal*)

GABBY Yes! Shut up!

SQUIER Thirty cents, eh Very reasonable Very reasonable indeed! But—that brings us to another embarrassment I—I haven't got thirty cents I haven't anything

BOZE Well—by God—I didn't expect to find such nerve in anybody that looked like you What are you going to do about it?

SQUIER I haven't the remotest . . .

BOZE What have you got in your pack there?

SQUIER Shirt, underwear, socks, toothbrush, passport, an insurance policy, and a copy of Modern Man in Search of a Soul, by Dr Jung

BOZE You thought you could pay with a kiss, did you? (*He seizes SQUIER again A car is heard stopping*) Thought if you brought a little romance into her poor, starved life the check'd be forgotten, did you?

GABBY Take your hands off him, Boze Go on, Alan, beat it!

SQUIER I'll go

BOZE I'll just give you a little head start (*He has SQUIER by the collar and is about to propel him out the door, when MR. and MRS CHISHOLM come in MR CHISHOLM is about forty-five—thin, dry, sharp, per-smackety, with pince-nez eyeglasses. MRS CHISHOLM is about ten years*

younger—rather attractive, rather chic, very world-weary The CHISHOLMS belong to the topmost layer of society in Dayton, Ohio)

MRS CHISHOLM (in an undertone to GABBY) Where is the Ladies' Room, please?

GABBY This way, madam (She directs MRS CHISHOLM to the door at the left and points off) That door there, on your left

MRS CHISHOLM Thank you (JOSEPH, the CHISHOLMS' Negro chauffeur, appears in the doorway. He is short, elegant, wears a neat uniform and yellow glasses)

JOSEPH We want fifteen gallons and a quart of oil

BOZE Be right with you (In an undertone to SQUIER) You ready to leave?

SQUIER Just a moment—my rucksack

GABBY Get on the job, Boze (She goes up to the lunch counter and hides her paintings. BOZE mutters something unpleasant to SQUIER and goes out. SQUIER is putting on his rucksack)

CHISHOLM What kind of cigars have you?

GABBY Admiration, White Owl, and Texas Dandies

CHISHOLM How much are the Texas Dandies?

GABBY Three for a dime

CHISHOLM Let me have an Admiration

GABBY (offering him the box) Come far?

CHISHOLM (selecting one) Yes. We've driven from Dayton, Ohio. We're on our way out to Santa Barbara for the winter (As he pays for the cigar) We lost a great deal of time today as I wanted Mrs. Chisholm to see the Gila cliff dwellings. She was rather disappointed. How far is it to the Phoenix Biltmore?

GABBY It's a good two hundred miles from here (She hands him his change)

CHISHOLM (consulting his watch) I imagine we can make it by midnight

GABBY You'll have to step. What kind of car you driving?

CHISHOLM (lighting the cigar) Duesenberg

SQUIER Good-bye, Miss Maple

GABBY Just a minute, Alan (She turns again to CHISHOLM) Excuse me, sir

CHISHOLM What?

GABBY Would you have room in your car for another party? (SQUIER signals to her not to bother)

CHISHOLM (suspicious) Who is it?

GABBY This friend of mine, Mr. Squier. He's on his way to the coast and he—he hasn't got a car just now. He's an author.

CHISHOLM (to SQUIER) Have you any luggage?

SQUIER Just this, sir—on my back
(CHISHOLM looks him over, goes to
the open door, and calls "Joseph")

CHISHOLM Where'd you come from?

SQUIER From Saint Tropez That's
on the Riviera
(JOSEPH comes in)

CHISHOLM I know where it is Do
you think it's all right to give this
man a lift to Phoenix?
(JOSEPH subjects SQUIER to ex-
tremely critical inspection)

SQUIER You've been there?

CHISHOLM Yes
(JOSEPH taps SQUIER all over for con-
cealed weapons)

SQUIER It's a lovely spot, Saint
Tropez

CHISHOLM (without enthusiasm)
Yes

JOSEPH I guess he's all right, Mr
Chisholm

CHISHOLM Very well (JOSEPH
touches his cap and goes out) Glad
to have you with us

SQUIER Thank you very much, Mr
Chisholm (GABBY punches the "No
Sale" key and takes out a silver dol-
lar SQUIER crosses to her) And
thank you, Miss Maple I'll remem-
ber your kindness

GABBY I forgot to give you your
change (She offers him the dollar.)

SQUIER Oh, no—I wanted you to
keep that

GABBY (pointing to a sign) Tipping
is un-American and we don't allow
it Here—take it

SQUIER I—I can't very well pretend
that I don't need .

GABBY Perhaps Mr Chisholm will
take you all the way to the coast.
When you get there, send me a post-
card, with a view of the Pacific
Ocean I like pictures of the sea
(She has forced the coin into his
hand MRS CHISHOLM emerges)

CHISHOLM This is Mr —er—

GABBY Mr Squier

CHISHOLM Mr Squier, darling
We're giving him a lift as far as the
Phoenix Biltmore (MRS. CHISHOLM
frowns) It's all right, Joseph went
over him

SQUIER How do you do, Mrs Chis-
holm?

MRS CHISHOLM How do you do?
Are we ready to start? (She crosses
toward the door)

CHISHOLM Just been waiting for
you Come along, Mr Squier
(The CHISHOLMS have gone out)

SQUIER I suppose I'll never see you
again

GABBY No That's the way it is in a
gas station They come and they go

SQUIER But, somehow, or other, I'll
repay that dollar God knows when

GABBY Perhaps we'll run into each
other some day in Bourges
(The horn of the Duesenberg is
heard summoning, shrilly)

SQUIER Good-bye, Gabrielle

GABBY (*shaking hands*) Good-bye, Alan (*He goes out After a moment, she comes down and picks up the Poems of François Villon The car is heard starting and charging off into the night GABBY suddenly remembers the Neon sign, goes to a switch by the door and turns it on BOZE comes in*)

BOZE Well—I took pity on that poor panhandler I slipped him a dime

GABBY You did?

BOZE I tried to—but he wouldn't take it He said, "I don't deserve your kindness," and handed it back It's a funny thing about a guy like that he'll hold you up for a meal and think nothing of it But when it comes to taking money, they suddenly discover they've got some pride

GABBY I appreciate that very much, Boze

BOZE Appreciate what, honey?

GABBY Your wanting to help him That was very kind

BOZE Why, say—you talk as if you were nuts about him

GABBY I'm not nuts about him But now and then you see somebody that's just a natural object of charity

BOZE (*pleased*) Well! If you appreciate it so much—how about being a little nice to me for a change? (*He goes to her and takes hold of her arms*)

GABBY I'd like to be nice to you I'd like to be nice to everybody

BOZE You can be, Gabby. Listen—how about us taking a little walk around the Mesa? It's warm out and the moon's just coming up How about it, sweetheart?

GABBY But supposing a car came along wanting something?

BOZE You know there's practically no traffic at this time of night

GABBY But suppose someone *did* come

BOZE Well—what if they did? In a pinch, the old man and that Mexican woman could take care of 'em And you know how your grandfather is—he'd never notice anything peculiar about us being out for a while

(*He goes after her*) Listen, honey sweet You've got to grow up sometime And before you can grow up, you've got to stop being afraid.

GABBY. I'm not afraid!

BOZE Oh, yes, you are You think I'm something terrible and you've got to keep away from me But I'm not so bad, Gabby I'm just a big guy with a good heart and plenty of hot blood And I'm full of love, honey (*He takes her in his arms*) And so are you You don't know it yet—but you are And when we get out there in the moonlight, you'll be glad I suggested it Honestly you will, honey sweet (*He kisses her lips passionately After a moment, she struggles a little He relaxes his hold on her He is confident of progress*) All right—I'm not holding you against your will I'm not trying to force you into anything that's wrong

GABBY I didn't say you were.

BOZE (*follows her*) It isn't wrong—except in the minds of old cranks that have forgotten how to love—if they ever knew My God! It's the most natural thing in the world, for two people, like us, that are young, and clean, and Why, it'd be wrong if we *didn't* take the chance when we've got it

GABBY Do you know what he said?

BOZE What who said?

GABBY He said we'd been trying to fight Nature, and we thought we'd licked it, because we've built a lot of dams, and cellophane and things like that But that's where we're wrong, and that's what's the matter with the world We've got to admit that Nature can't be beaten!

BOZE Well—*isn't* that exactly what I've been trying to tell you all along?

GABBY I guess it is, Boze (*He takes her in his arms again*)

BOZE You're coming with me, aren't you, sweetheart? You're going to find out things about Nature more wonderful and exciting than anything you ever dreamed of Aren't you, honey sweet?

GABBY Oh, well—what the hell! I'll go out with you, Boze (*He kisses her*) We'd better go now

BOZE Yes, Gabby Oh, God—you're a beautiful kid! (*He kisses her again, passionately A car is heard stopping They break apart, quickly*) I'll get rid of 'em fast (*He starts toward the door, but stops short when it opens and JACKIE appears He is a short, chubby, cherubic gangster He carries a sub-machine gun and wears a cheery smile*)

JACKIE Now—just behave yourselves, folks, and nobody'll get hurt. Who's the boss here?

BOZE He's out

JACKIE Got any guns with you? (*He searches BOZE with practiced speed.*)

BOZE No (*He and GABBY have been retreating into the room as JACKIE has advanced Following JACKIE has come RUBY, thin, sallow, adenoidal—and after him has come DUKE MANTEE—well-built but stoop-shouldered, with a vaguely thoughtful, saturnine face He is about thirty-five and, if he hadn't elected to take up banditry, might have been a fine leftfielder There is, about him, one quality of resemblance to ALAN SQUIER he too is unmistakably condemned He is hairless and unshaven and wears an ill-fitting suit with a gray prison shirt MANTEE carries no visible arms, but RUBY has another machine-gun and a sawed-off shotgun*)

JACKIE This is Duke Mantec, folks He's the world-famous killer and he's hungry
(*The DUKE looks around*)

DUKE What's in there and in there? (*He speaks quietly, even gently, with an effortless ferocity*)

GABBY That's the kitchen, and in there's our bedrooms

DUKE You two married?

GABBY No He just works here

JACKIE Anybody else in?

BOZE Only one old man and . .

GABBY My grandfather's in there and the cook There's nobody in there

DUKE Bring 'em in, Jackie.

JACKIE O K, Duke *(He goes out at the upper left DUKE goes to the front door and calls out)*

DUKE Hey, Pyles *(PYLES' voice is heard to reply "Yeah, boss")* Back that car into the shadow and stay with it

PYLES' VOICE Do I get to eat?

DUKE You'll eat *(The DUKE goes to the table, downstage right, and takes his coat off, revealing a harness over his waistcoat with two revolvers in holsters under either arm-pit He folds his coat neatly and lays it on the bench, then turns to RUBY)* Hey, Ruby—pull that table over here *(RUBY moves the table to the right as directed BOZE lowers his hands)*

DUKE Keep 'em up *(The hands go up promptly RUBY picks up his machine-gun)* Take a look around in there

RUBY How long do we stay here?

DUKE Until they get here

RUBY You're going to wait for that blonde?

DUKE Get out!

RUBY O K *(He goes out at the lower left)*

DUKE You sit down there *(BOZE sits down as directed at the center table)* What have you got to eat, sister? *(GABBY produces the menu card)*

The DUKE addresses BOZE) Football player, eh?

BOZE Yes And you better not let me get close enough to take a sock at you

DUKE *(unconcerned)* I used to be quite a fan What's your school?

BOZE Nevada Tech

DUKE Never heard of it *(GRAMP and PAULA the cook come in from the kitchen, followed by JACKIE)*

PAULA Don't shoot me, mister Don't kill me, mister In the name of the Holy Mother of God, don't kill me, mister *(JACKIE prods her with the machine-gun She screams lustily)*

JACKIE Quiet, Pepita—quiet We aren't going to do you any harm *(In a ludicrously soothing voice)* All we're going to do is ask you to cook something You wouldn't mind that, would you, Pepita?

PAULA No, mister I swear to God, I cook anything You just tell me

JACKIE All right, Pepita We got that settled

GRAMP *(staring admiringly at DUKE)* So you're Mantee, are you? You're the killer!

DUKE Would you mind sitting down over there, Pop? Take a look around that counter, Jackie *(GRAMP sits down at the left JACKIE searches the counter)*

JACKIE Yes, Pop That's the greatest killer alive today Did you hear what

happened in Oklahoma City? (*The DUKE inspects the menu*)

GRAMP Yes—I heard You pulled off a massacre

JACKIE Who said it was a massacre? (*He comes down from the counter*)

GRAMP The Denver Post (*He holds up the paper*)

JACKIE (*snatching it*) Let me see it!

DUKE Put that paper down! (*JACKIE drops the paper*)

JACKIE Did it say how many we killed?

GRAMP Six killed and four wounded

JACKIE Did you hear that, Duke? We killed six and wounded four (*He returns to the counter to empty the cash register*)

DUKE (*to GABBY*) Got any steak?

GABBY Only hamburger

PAULA And we got chicken, mister

GRAMP Two of the wounded's not expected to live

DUKE All right Cook the chicken and four hamburgers And plenty of onions

JACKIE Boy! That was some massacre!

GABBY Anything else? (*RUBY comes in from the lower left*)

RUBY Nobody in there, boss There's a good window at the end of the hall

with a four-foot drop to the ground, right by where the car is

DUKE Take a look around outside Tell Pyles not to hit that horn unless somebody comes up that really looks like trouble, and then to hit it plenty (*RUBY goes out*) Bring us beer for the bunch, sister (*He addresses BOZE and GRAMP*) You fellers like to join us?

BOZE I never touch it

GRAMP I guess I'll have whiskey

GABBY (*to GRAMP*) No, none for you, Gramp

GRAMP (*disconsolate*) She says I can't have even a little one

DUKE Let him have it, sister

JACKIE Sure! He can only be young once

PAULA Can I begin cooking now, mister?

DUKE Yeh Go with her, Jackie (*RUBY returns*)

JACKIE Come on, Pepita And while the chicken's in the oven, you and me'll have a little fun, eh, kid? (*They go out into the kitchen*)

DUKE Hey, Ruby Sit down there (*RUBY sits down between the counter and the front door*) And keep that gun in your lap (*RUBY obeys, and from now on his eyes ceaselessly patrol the area from the front door to the kitchen door. The DUKE crosses with a convict's gait and goes out at the left GABBY is behind the counter getting out the*

beer GRAMP rises and starts to cross to his rocking chair)

RUBY Sit down!

GRAMP (*sitting down hastily*) You needn't think I'm scared of you. I've known *real* killers in my time. And they knew how to make a six-shooter act like a machine-gun. Did you ever hear of fanning?

AUBY No

GRAMP Well—you'd file down the trigger catch so that the hammer worked free, and then you'd fan it like this (*He points his forefinger at RUBY and wiggles his thumb*) Wild Bill Hickock once knocked over five men that way. They was lined up at a bar and (*SQUIER comes in, hatless and breathless* GABBY is in the center of the stage, with the tray of bottles and glasses of beer)

GABBY Alan! What did you come back for?

SQUIER (*panting*) There are some bandits around here

BOZE Yes. So we heard

SQUIER They cut in ahead of us about a mile down the road, and made us stop and get out, and then they got into Mr. Chisholm's car and drove off. They said we could take their car, but they'd left it locked. They were terrible-looking cut-throats, with a lot of guns and ammunition. (*He addresses BOZE*) Could you come with me back there and see if you can unlock that (*The DUKE comes in from the left*)

GABBY Look out, Alan! (*SQUIER turns and sees the DUKE. Then he looks around and sees RUBY who has raised his machine-gun*)

SQUIER (*lamely*) Oh—so we—meet again

DUKE Sit down, pal. Down there

SQUIER Why, thanks, I'd be delighted to

DUKE Wait a minute (*He takes the rucksack from SQUIER, who then sits down opposite BOZE at the center table*)

GRAMP (*proudly*) That's Duke Mantee. We were looking at his picture. Remember?

SQUIER Yes—I remember (*The DUKE goes to the extreme right and sits down, his back to the wall*)

DUKE Join us in a glass of beer?

SQUIER Why—thank you—but might I have some whiskey, instead?

DUKE Certainly. Give him a drink, sister. And how about turning on the radio?

(*GABBY puts the bottle and a glass before SQUIER. He pours himself a stiff one*)

GRAMP What did I tell you? Look at that chin. He's a killer, all right!

BOZE He's a gangster and a rat!

SQUIER Sh!

GRAMP He ain't a gangster! He's a real old-time desperado. Gangsters is foreigners. He's an American! And

if the sheriffs find out he's here, we'll see some real killing—*won't we?*

(GABBY turns on the radio Soft, sticky music emerges)

DUKE The cops ain't likely to catch up with us—not tonight So we can all be quiet and peaceable, and have a few beers together, and listen to the music—and not make any wrong moves Because—I may as well tell you, folks—old Ruby there, with the machine-gun—he's pretty nervous and jumpy and he's got the itch between his fingers So let's everybody stay where they are

SQUIER Let there be killing! All evening long, I've had a feeling of Destiny closing in (To the DUKE) Do you believe in astrology?

DUKE I couldn't say, pal

SQUIER I don't—normally But just now, as I was walking along that road, I began to feel the enchantment of this desert I looked up at the sky and the stars seemed to be reproving me, mocking me They were pointing the way to that gleaming sign, and saying, "There's the end of your tether! You thought you could escape it, and skip off to the Phoenix Biltmore But we know better" That's what the stars told me and perhaps they know that carnage is imminent, and that I'm due to be among the fallen It's a fascinating thought

DUKE Let's skip it (He lifts his glass) Here's happy days

GRAMP Yes, sir—it sure is pleasant to have a killer around here again

SQUIER Yes It's pleasant to be back again—among the living (He raises his glass) Hooray! (He drinks)

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

About half an hour has elapsed since the end of Act I

DUKE and JACKIE are finishing their meal at the right table RUBY is sitting on a stool at the counter, drinking coffee, watching everything GRAMP and PAULA are sitting at the table at the left BOZE and SQUIER are at the center The radio is murmuring faintly

GABBY alone is permitted to move about—removing dishes, refilling coffee cups

GRAMP That old Andy Anderson I was telling you about, he was a great character He didn't kill for business reasons, like you fellers He killed just for the fun of it He was born

somewheres up in Nova Scotia and come down to the State of Maine so's he could get into the Civil War and he fit all through it And he never stopped talking about it as

long as he lived He always said that was a regular paradise for killing He'd stuck a Johnny Reb with his bayonet, throw him over his shoulder and then stuck another And he always said that the beauty of it was there was no sheriffs around to reprove him for it

JACKIE Say, Pop—I wish you wouldn't talk so much about blood while we're eating

BOZE Got it on your conscience, eh?

JACKIE On my *what*?

BOZE Yes—I thought so A punk like you hasn't got any more conscience than a coyote

JACKIE Hmm! Listen to the half-back How much did you get for playing on the team?

BOZE I worked my way through college!

JACKIE What were you doing? Peddling subscriptions to The American Boy?

BOZE I worked for three whole years in the Student Laundry

JACKIE Oh—how nice! (He lifts his coffee cup)

BOZE Wait a minute—smart guy I got something to show you (He reaches for his wallet)

RUBY Keep your hand off your hip!

BOZE I was only going to show him a newspaper clipping that said I ought to be All-Amenca I scared you, did I? I know it You're all yellow

(A none too pleasant expression appears in JACKIE's eyes over the rim of his coffee cup)

SQUIER I'd be a little tactful Boze Remember—they're your guests (GABBY has sat down at the center table between SQUIER and BOZE)

BOZE They're a bunch of yellow dogs That's what made 'em turn crooked in the first place

SQUIER No—no Cowardice isn't the cause of crime It has something to do with glands

BOZE They just haven't got the guts to face the bigger problems of life They've got to fight their way with guns instead of with principles (SQUIER is by now slightly tight and is to become more so, by imperceptible degrees, as the Act proceeds JACKIE sets down his coffee cup with ominous deliberateness and rises picking up a sawed-off shotgun)

JACKIE Step over to that side of the room, halfback

GRAMP You're going to kill him?

BOZE (scared) It's just what I said

JACKIE Come on This shotgun scatters, and you wouldn't want me to hurt that cute dame, would you? (The dulcet chimes of the radio are heard BOZE slowly rises)

SQUIER (to JACKIE) You know—you're taking this much too seriously (The radio announcer's voice can be heard introducing the nightly news broadcast.)

BOZE I'm not afraid to die (*But his voice is strained*)

JACKIE Come on! Move!

DUKE Step up that radio—will you, sister? (*To JACKIE*) Sit down, Jackie Cooper

JACKIE Did you hear what he ?

DUKE (*grinning*) Sit down! (*To BOZE*) You too (*They both sit down GABBY has turned up the volume control dial*)

RADIO VOICE (*very brisk*) all anxious first off to hear latest bulletins concerning the greatest man-hunt in human history A monster dragnet has been cast over the entire southwest from St Louis to the Pacific Coast National Guardsmen are co-operating with state police and the famed Texas Rangers as well as countless local posses and Legion posts in a determined effort to apprehend the members of the notorious Mantee gang—to bring to justice this fierce, colorful band of murderers, kidnappers, bank-robbers, perpetrators of the shocking massacre in Oklahoma City

JACKIE Take a bow, Duke

RADIO VOICE The gang made its escape in two cars, one of which contained Mantee and three other men, the other car containing three men and one woman The Mantee car was seen early this morning at Tularosa and later at Hillsboro in New Mexico The second car was positively identified at Estelline in the Texas Panhandle when it stopped at the local police station, held it up, and departed with a large supply of guns and ammunition

JACKIE Nice going, boys! I don't see how they did it with Doris along to

DUKE Shut up!

RADIO VOICE Both cars are undoubtedly headed for the border, but it is considered certain they haven't reached it, due to the number and vigilance of the patrols War-time conditions prevail on all the roads of Western Texas, New Mexico and Arizona and you know how the officers of the law are in this red-blooded frontier region they shoot first and ask questions afterward (*JACKIE indicates his scorn, but DUKE withers him with a look.*)

RADIO VOICE The Governor of Arizona has issued the following statement "As long as Mantee and his followers are at large a blot of shame will mar the proud scutcheon of these United States Any citizen who knowingly gives aid or comfort to these public enemies is a traitor to his country and will be answerable before the great bar of public opinion " I'll now give you the scores of the leading football games of the day Carnegie Tech—13, Miami—7, Washington State—19

DUKE Turn it off, sister

RADIO VOICE U S C—o, Navy—21, Virginia—6 (*GABBY switches off the radio*)

JACKIE (*to PAULA*) Did you hear that, Pepita? You're a traitor for cooking for us They'll string you up for that—if they can find a tree around here

PAULA The Holy Mother of God knows they put a gun in my stomach and said *you cook*

JACKIE Sure—*she knows*. But that don't count with the Governor We're Public Enemies

DUKE (to RUBY) Go on out to the car, Ruby, and tell Pyles to come in and get his supper And tell him to bring in that sack of ammunition and the road map And you stay there and keep awake

RUBY Yeah O K (He goes out)

GRAMP Are you going to make a run for the Border, boys?

JACKIE Oh, sure! We'll give you our whole route before we leave, so's you can tell the hick cops and have 'em give us a motorcycle escort

SQUIER I think I'm about ready for another whiskey, Gabrielle, if I may (GABBY goes behind the counter and brings forth a quart bottle and a bottle of drinking water, which she places on the table)

BOZE Listen, Panhandler! Who told you you could call her by her first name?

SQUIER Now, please, Boze—you and I must be friends, as long as they'll let us

JACKIE Why don't you take a sock at him, halfback? He hasn't got a gun (PYLES comes in He is a lean, lithe Negro, who carries a machine-gun and a bulging gunny sack)

PYLES Hi, everybody! 'Bout time you got around to asking me in Here's your map, boss (He puts the sack full of ammunition down on a bench at the back, and tosses the map down on the table before DUKE)

Lord, God! Look what you done to that chicken!

DUKE (to PAULA) Cook him some hamburger, sister

PAULA All right, mister (She rises) But you people better tell that mister Governor I didn't

DUKE Go with her, Pyles

PYLES O K, boss I guess I don't get to eat with the white folks (He picks up the carcass of the chicken and starts to gnaw it as he crosses to the kitchen)

DUKE Look around in there and see if you can find any rope

PYLES O K, boss (He turns quickly to the DUKE) When we going to lam out of here?

DUKE When it's time

JACKIE Sure—as soon as the Duke connects with that heavy date (He winks broadly at PYLES)

PYLES (as he goes) Well—I don't like that dame stuff I like to get out of range (He has gone out at the left after PAULA)
(The DUKE has opened the Road Atlas to Arizona and New Mexico, and from now on he and JACKIE are studying it and murmuring to each other in inaudible tones)

GRAMP How about passing that bottle over this way?

SQUIER Why, certainly Forgive me (He is reaching for the bottle, but GABBY stops him.)

GABBY. No! (To GRAMP) You've had all you're going to get.

SQUIER (to GRAMP). I'm very sorry

GRAMP Oh—that's all right (He reaches in his pocket for his pipe)

JACKIE What are you doing?

GRAMP Going to smoke my pipe

DUKE Go ahead, Pop

(GRAMP takes out the pipe, fills it with great care, lights it, and lapses into silence as he sits in his rocking chair)

BOZE How long are you yeggs going to stick around here?

JACKIE Keep quiet, halfback

BOZE The longer the better, to suit me Because the U S Government is after you and pretty soon they'll be sending for your relatives to identify the bodies and it will probably be the first good look at you they've had in years

GABBY You'd better do what you're told and keep your trap shut

SQUIER That's good advice, Boze Because those glandular phenomena I was talking about manifest themselves in sudden and violent ways

BOZE (savagely) How are you going to pay for all that liquor you're drinking? (BOZE is in an ugly mood, the result of humiliating frustration, and he is taking it out on the one completely defenseless person present)

SQUIER I can pay, and will pay, Boze For every drop! I have a dollar

BOZE Oh, you have! So you were holding out on us when you

SQUIER No— No. I've acquired it since then

BOZE Where did you get it?

GABBY Probably those rich people gave it to him Now lay off! (The kitchen door opens and PYLES appears)

PYLES Here's some clothesline, boss

DUKE Throw it down (PYLES tosses the coil on the floor and vanishes into the kitchen)

BOZE So you turned down my dame and accepted their dollar Your pride has its price, eh!

SQUIER If you must know—I'll tell you the extent of my pride Gabrielle gave me the dollar

BOZE (to GABBY) You did?

GABBY It's none of your God-damn business what I do

BOZE You were feeling kind of generous tonight, weren't you? (He turns to SQUIER) Would you like to know what she was just going to give me when those rats showed up? Would you like to know?

GABBY Well—speaking of rats! Of all the low, shmy, stinking

SQUIER No, Gabby You mustn't blame Boze for anything he says now He's a man of muscle, and he's suffering from the pangs of frustration

GABBY I say, you're a dirty, low, stinking

BOZE I didn't mean it, Gabby

GABBY Then why the hell did you start ?

BOZE I'm terribly sorry, honey sweet They've got me absolutely crazy mad, with those shotguns and machine-guns staring me in the face

SQUIER That's all it is

BOZE I didn't know what I was saying Will you please forgive me, Gabby?

GABBY No! Never!

BOZE (*humbly*) All right

SQUIER I sympathize with you utterly, Boze Did you ever read "All Quiet on the Western Front"?

BOZE No

SQUIER Well—all of us here tonight are under very much the same tension You'd better have a drink, old man (*He has one himself*)

BOZE (*ignoring SQUIER*) I love you, Gabby (*Startled by this sudden declaration SQUIER sets down his glass*) I love you, sweetheart—and if I thought I'd done or said anything to hurt you, I'd go over and I'd hang one on those yeggs and die for it, gladly Please tell me you forgive me, honey sweet

SQUIER Excuse me (*He stands up*) Would you rather I left?

JACKIE Stay where you are!

SQUIER But I'm intruding

JACKIE Sit down
(*SQUIER sits*)

GABBY That's all right, Alan We've got nothing to hide Have we, Boze?

BOZE No—worse luck

GABBY (*to SQUIER*) I told you he'd been trying to make me

BOZE Now, listen

GABBY And tonight, just after you left, he went at it again And I decided I was ready to give in to him, and find out what it's like

BOZE That's a dirty trick—telling that, before a total stranger

SQUIER (*to BOZE*) Honestly, Boze—I'm not blaming you—not for an instant

GABBY (*to BOZE*) I'll say this much for you you're a pretty good love-maker when you get going

BOZE I wasn't turning on any act I told you I was full of love, and I was telling the truth, and I don't care who knows it

(*JACKIE has arisen and started to cross toward the left with the map*)

JACKIE Full of love, are you, half-back?

DUKE And don't let that Mexican hear you mention the names of any of those towns

JACKIE I'll be careful, Duke I don't want to die I got a dame, too (*To BOZE*) Keep it up, halfback I'm rooting for you Touch-down! (*He goes into the kitchen*)

BOZE (*to GABBY*) It doesn't make any difference to you what I'm trying to tell you—because you don't know

what it means to be really crazy about somebody
(*She looks at him, through him, for a moment*)

GABBY For all you know, maybe I do

BOZE I don't believe it Who have you ever ?

DUKE Get me a cigar, will you, sister?

GABBY (*rising*) We've got Admirations, White Owl, and Texas Dan-dies

DUKE Whatever costs the most
(*GABBY has gone back of the counter to get a cigar box, which she takes down to the DUKE*)

GRAMP You fellers going to spend the night here?

DUKE Can't say, Pop Maybe we'll decide to get buried here (*GABBY hands him the box of cigars and he takes a fistful*) Thanks

SQUIER You'd better come with me, Duke I'm planning to be buried in the Petrified Forest I've been evolving a theory about that that would interest you It's the graveyard of the civilization that's been shot from under us It's the world of outmoded ideas. Platonism—patnotism—Christianity—romance—the economics of Adam Smith—they're all so many dead stumps in the desert That's where I belong—and so do you, Duke For you're the last great apostle of rugged individualism Aren't you?
(*DUKE has been calmly defoiling a cigar, biting the end off, and lighting it*)

DUKE Maybe you're right, pal

SQUIER (*returning to his drink*) I'm eternally right But what use do I make of it?

DUKE I couldn't say

BOZE (*to GABBY, who is resuming her seat*) Who were you ever crazy about?

GABBY Is it any of your business?

BOZE Everything about you is my business!

GABBY Well—if you've got to know—it's him

SQUIER (*startled*) What?

GABBY I was just telling Boze that I'm crazy about you

BOZE That panhandler?

GABBY You don't know the worst of him He's more than a panhandler He's a gigolo

BOZE Did you ever see him before?

GABBY No But that doesn't matter I love him I don't think I'll ever love anybody else

SQUIER Can I possibly be drunk?

GABBY You will be if you keep hitting that rye

BOZE How did you happen to get that way, Gabby?

GABBY I don't know Just something

SQUIER I swear before God, Boze—I wasn't trying to be seductive

BOZE (*scornfully*) No—I don't believe you could even try

GABBY After you left, Alan—I felt as if something had been taken out of me—or sort of as if I'd come out of a dream I caught on to myself, and I knew I'm just another desert rat, and I'll never be anything else I'd better get rid of all the girlish bunk that was in me, like thinking so much about going to France, and Art, and dancing in the streets And I'd better make the most of what I can find right here—and it happened to be you, Boze Do you know what I asked him? I asked him to let me go away with him, and live in sin (*She turns again to SQUIER*) But you wouldn't have done it, even if we'd had the money—would you, Alan? (*SQUIER is looking straight into her eyes*) Would you?

SQUIER No, Gabrielle

GABBY (*to BOZE*) You see—he doesn't give a hoot in hell for me I saw that, plainly enough And it only made me love him all the more And that's why I was willing to go out into the moonlight with you, when Duke Mantee came in

DUKE I'm sorry, sister I don't like to interfere with anybody's fun

BOZE (*with labored insincerity*) Oh—that's all right It was probably all for the best

DUKE Yes When I look at you, I guess it was (*The DUKE turns and opens the window at his side about three inches*)

SQUIER (*still looking at GABBY*) I'm sorry now that I came back. (*BOZE has darted a look at the DUKE,*

and there is born in his mind an idea: by a sudden tiger-like leap, he might get possession of the shotgun which is lying on the table)

BOZE. I'll take a drink of that stuff (*GABBY passes him the bottle which has remained on the table BOZE pours himself a stiff one, drinks it—and a moment later pours and consumes another But he is constantly, furiously watching the DUKE*)

SQUIER (*still looking at GABBY*) When I went out before—it was the poignant ending to a—an idyllic interlude But now it's spoiled I can't go forth quite so gracefully again

GABBY You're sorry you heard the real truth?

SQUIER I told you that I'm the type of person to whom the truth is always distasteful

GABBY That wife of yours must have been terrible

SQUIER Why do you think so?

GABBY Because she's talked all the heart out of you I could put it back, Alan

SQUIER (*with sudden irritability*) No! Don't delude yourself If you have love, and don't know what to do with it, why don't you lavish it on Duke Mantee? There's your real mate—another child of Nature

GABBY You'd better not drink any more of that rye

SQUIER It's not the rye! It's the same disease that's afflicting Boze! Impotence! (*He stands up*)

DUKE Sit down, pal.

SQUIER What do you care whether I sit or stand? What can I do to assail your superiority?

DUKE I got to think about my health, pal

SQUIER If I had a machine-gun, I wouldn't know what to do with it

I want to talk to him (*Indicating GRAMP*)

GRAMP Me?

DUKE You can talk sitting down I heard you doing it

SQUIER (*sitting down*) Very well

GRAMP What's on your mind?

SQUIER Those Liberty Bonds of yours, buried in Santa Fé

GRAMP (*sharply*) How do you know about them?

SQUIER What are you going to do with them?

GRAMP. Going to leave 'em where they are!

SQUIER Yes—leave them where they are! Your granddaughter is stifling and suffocating in this desert when a few of your thousands would give her the chance to claim her birthright

GRAMP Yes—and maybe give you the chance to steal it I've heard what you've been saying

SQUIER That's a low way to justify your stinginess Oh—I know you were a pioneer once But what are

you now? A mean old miser, hanging on to that money as though it meant something Why in God's name don't you die and do the world some good?

GRAMP Must be drunk

DUKE (*rising menacingly*) Yes—drunk—or just about the lowest-grade son of a bitch I ever run across What do you mean talking to an old man like that?
(*RUBY appears in the door*)

RUBY Say—there's three people coming down the road Two men and a woman Look to me like the owners of that Duesenberg

DUKE O K Keep quiet when they get here

RUBY It's all right out here You can see plain in the moonlight It's kind of nice to look at, too (*He goes out*)

SQUIER I admit it, Duke I was guilty of bad taste—and I apologize, Mr Maple

GRAMP Sure

DUKE You'd better crawl, or I might have to put the lug on you Talking to an old man like that

SQUIER Listen, Duke If you had any of Robin Hood in you you'd go to Santa Fé, and rob that bank, and give it to her, before it's too late for her to use it as it should be used .

GRAMP She'll get it when she needs it—when she has a family of her own to support—and probably a good-for-nothing unemployed husband

(*DUKE turns to look out the window BOZE sees his chance He effects the tiger-like leap, seizes the shotgun and*

wrests it from the DUKE's frantic grasp BOZE backs away quickly, covering the DUKE)

BOZE (*breathless with excitement*) Put 'em up! Now I've got you I've been waiting for this chance I've been watching every move you (MR and MRS CHISHOLM appear in the doorway, followed by JOSEPH Seeing BOZE with the shotgun, and DUKE with hands up, MRS CHISHOLM screams BOZE whirls to cover them As he does so, DUKE whips out one of his revolvers and fires BOZE drops the shotgun and grabs his left hand with his right The kitchen door flies open and JACKIE hurtles out)

DUKE Get that gun (As JACKIE dives for the shotgun, the CHISHOLMS turn to rush into the night PYLES has followed JACKIE out of the kitchen, his machine-gun at the alert, his mouth full)

RUBY'S VOICE (*from off right*) Get back there or I'll shoot you dead!

GABBY Are you hurt, Boze?

DUKE (*to JACKIE*) Give me that Tommy (JACKIE gives his machine-gun to DUKE MR and MRS CHISHOLM and JOSEPH return, followed by RUBY)

BOZE He got me in the hand (*His left hand is seen to be covered with blood*)

JACKIE So you tried to be brave, did you?

DUKE Frisk 'em, Ruby (RUBY hurriedly taps the CHISHOLMS all over)

MRS CHISHOLM Let us out of here! We didn't have anything to do with this

JACKIE Shut up

MRS CHISHOLM I won't have that man pawing me

DUKE Get back to the car, Ruby

RUBY They're harmless, Duke (*He goes*)

DUKE Sit down over there Come on! Step! You down there (*The CHISHOLMS sit at the center table, with SQUIER JOSEPH sits upstage by the counter*) Take him in and bandage him, sister He'll be all right Go with 'em, Jackie—and you better take that hne and tie him up and leave him in there (GABBY and BOZE cross toward the left)

JACKIE (*picking up the clothes-line*) I'll tie him

BOZE (*to the CHISHOLMS*) God damn you! Why did you have to pick that moment to come in here?

CHISHOLM Why indeed!

GABBY Come on, Boze

BOZE Oh, God! I had the chance and I muffed it I could have got Mantee and got him good

JACKIE Tough luck, halfback You made a nice try (GABBY and BOZE go out at the left followed by JACKIE)

PYLES Say, boss—we better lam out of here

DUKE We go when I say so

PYLES (*contemplating the CHISHOLMS*) But if any more people come in here we'll have to be sending out for recruits (*He turns to JOSEPH*) Hi-yah, colored brother!

JOSEPH (*with dignified asperity*)
Good evening

DUKE Finish your supper, Pyles

PYLES Sure you don't need me?
They almost got you that time

DUKE Almost ain't good enough Go on

PYLES O K, boss (*He goes out into kitchen*)

GRAMP Say, Mantee—did you mean to hit him in the hand or was that a bad shot?

DUKE (*quietly*) It was a bad shot, Pop But I had to get it off fast Now, listen—I let that mugg make a mugg out of me But—don't anybody try that again Just keep in mind that I and the boys are candidates for hanging, and the minute anybody makes the wrong move, I'm going to kill the whole lot of you So keep your seats (*He returns his revolver to its holster, picks up the Tommy gun and sits down at the right There is a dead pause*)

CHISHOLM Are you Mantee?

DUKE Yes, pal

MRS CHISHOLM I *knew* it was a mistake to take that hitchhiker into the car

CHISHOLM I don't see what *he* had to do with it

MRS CHISHOLM He certainly didn't help matters much (*SQUIER was at first stunned by BOZE's spectacular action—then, as he thought it over, resentful—and then, as he thought still more, determined to do something spectacular himself He has helped himself to another stiff slug of rye*)

SQUIER (*gravely*) I'm afraid that's unanswerable, Mr Chisholm I have not helped matters at all—up to now (*He finishes his drink and turns to DUKE*) Would you mind passing me that rucksack that's on the bench beside you?

DUKE What do you want with it?

SQUIER I want to get out my life-insurance policy If you reach in there, you'll find it, in a bundle of papers (*The DUKE reaches with his left hand and extracts the papers*)

GRAMP What do you want with your insurance? Expecting to die?

SQUIER You've guessed it, Mr Maple (*The DUKE tosses the bundle to SQUIER*) Thank you Now can I take out my fountain pen? Here it is (*He points to his breast pocket The DUKE nods SQUIER takes out his pen, and starts to write on the policy*)

CHISHOLM (*to the DUKE*) What about my car?

DUKE That's a nice bus you got there

CHISHOLM. Are you going to restore it to me? And my luggage

DUKE You're likely to get the car back Let's hope it won't be all full of bullet holes and blood

MRS CHISHOLM There's one little travelling case with some—some things I need Can I please have that?

DUKE I took a look in that case

MRS CHISHOLM You're going to steal it?

DUKE Yes, ma'am I got a friend that likes rubies.

MRS CHISHOLM You're a filthy thief!

DUKE Yes, ma'am

CHISHOLM Look here, old man How much will you take to let us out of here?

DUKE How much have you got?

CHISHOLM I could let you have—say—two hundred dollars in cash

DUKE Bring it here (CHISHOLM walks timorously over to the DUKE, produces his wallet and starts to take out some bills) Just put down the whole wallet (CHISHOLM does so, with trembling hands) Got any more?

CHISHOLM (patting his pants pockets) Only some small change

DUKE Keep it

MRS CHISHOLM (rising) Now can we go?

DUKE No

CHISHOLM. But I understood that you .

DUKE Sit down where you were

MRS CHISHOLM You are a cheap, contemptible, crooked thief

CHISHOLM Be quiet, Edith (He resumes his seat) We're in his hands There's nothing we can do—but hope that someday the United States Government will take some measures to protect the lives and property of its citizens (The DUKE has been calmly taking all the money from the wallet)

DUKE Here's your wallet, pal (He tosses it to CHISHOLM, who stoops to pick it up.)

(SQUIER has finished writing He turns to the DUKE and from now on speaks rapidly and with a peculiar earnestness)

SQUIER Duke—I have a great favor to ask of you

DUKE Yeah?

SQUIER I don't think you'll refuse it Because—you're a man of imagination You're not afraid to do—rather outlandish things

DUKE What are you getting at?

SQUIER This insurance policy—it's my only asset It's for five thousand dollars—and it was made out in favor of my wife She's a rich woman, and she doesn't need that money—and I know she doesn't want it, from me I've written on the policy that I want the money paid to Miss Maple—that young lady in there If Mr and

Mrs. Chisholm will witness my signature, I'm sure it will be all right. My wife would never contest it. She's a good sort—really she is. Well—what I'm getting at is this, Duke—after they've signed, I wish—I'd be much obliged if you'd just—kill me (*The duke looks at him levelly*). It couldn't make any difference to you, Duke. After all, if they catch you they can hang you only once—and you know better than anyone else they already have more than they need against you. And you can't be bothered by any humane considerations. You'd have a hard time finding a more suitable candidate for extermination. I'll be mourned by no one. In fact, my passing will evoke sighs of relief in certain quarters. You see, Duke—in killing me—you'd only be executing the sentence of the law—I mean, natural law—survival of the fittest.

GRAMP My God—he is drunk!

DUKE Sure—and having a fine time showing off.

SQUIER Of course I'm showing off. I'm trying to outdo Boze in gallantry. But is there anything unnatural in that? Boze was ready to sacrifice his life to become an All-American star. And I'm ready to do likewise (*He addresses the CHISHOLMS*). Can't you see I mean it?

CHISHOLM I'm afraid I'm not greatly interested in your whimsicalities.

SQUIER I don't blame you. But you must remember that this is a weird country we're in. These Mesas are enchanted—and you have to be prepared for the improbable. I'm only asking that you attest to my signature on this.

MRS CHISHOLM I believe you *do* mean it!

SQUIER Good for you, Mrs. Chisholm! You're a kindred spirit! I'll bet that you, too, have been thrilled by "A Tale of Two Cities."

MRS CHISHOLM You're in love with her, aren't you?

SQUIER Yes—yes, I suppose I am. And not unreasonably. She has heroic stuff in her. She may be one of the immortal women of France—another Joan of Arc, or Georges Sand, or Madame Curie. I want to show her that I believe in her—and how else can I do it? Living, I'm worth nothing to her. Dead—I can buy her the tallest cathedrals, and golden vineyards, and dancing in the streets. One well-directed bullet will accomplish that. And it will gain a measure of reflected glory for him who fired it and him who stopped it (*He holds up the insurance policy*). This document will be my ticket to immortality. It will inspire people to say of me, "There was an artist, who died before his time!" Will you do it, Duke?

DUKE (*quietly*) I'll be glad to.

SQUIER Then can I have this signed?

DUKE Sure.

CHISHOLM (*to GRAMP*) Is he by any chance insane?

GRAMP Don't ask me. He's no friend of mine.

MRS CHISHOLM Of course he's insane. But what of it? (*SQUIER gives her the policy and the pen*.)

SQUIER Thank you, Mrs Chisholm Please sign where I've written, "Witnessed this day" (*They start to sign*) I'm going to entrust this to you, Mr Maple And after I—after the Duke has obliged, put it in the hands of some good lawyer for collection My passport is on that table for identification purposes Thank you very much (*As they hand him back the policy*) Here, Mr Maple (*He rises and hands the policy to GRAMP*)

DUKE Let me know when you want to be killed

SQUIER Pick your own moment, Duke Say—just before you leave (*He strides upstage nervously, aimlessly*) But I'd prefer to have her think that you did it in cold blood Will you all please remember that? (*PYLES comes in*)

DUKE O K, pal But for the time being, you better sit down You might get to feeling reckless (*SQUIER sits down*)

SQUIER I want to Now—I think we'd all better have a drink

MRS CHISHOLM Good!

SQUIER (*to PYLES*) Would you mind passing glasses to Mr and Mrs Chisholm?

PYLES Sure (*He goes behind the counter for glasses, while SQUIER pours himself another*) Say, boss—let's lam it out of here I don't like all them big windows (*He takes the glasses down to the CHISHOLMS*)

DUKE We got to give them more time

PYLES You oughtn't to trust a dame, They probably got lost down there in the Panhandle

DUKE They know this country like a book Dorns was the one who picked this place for meeting up

PYLES Well—I wish to God she'd show

DUKE Where's that cook?

PYLES She's all right I locked her up (*PYLES has been passing glasses around GRAMP has been reading the policy carefully He turns his attention to PYLES*)

GRAMP Hey—I'll have a little of that, too

PYLES (*pouring a drink*) Why—certainly

DUKE Don't give it to him, Pyles The girl says he oughtn't to have it

SQUIER Better not, Mr Maple, we'll all need clear heads for what is to come

GRAMP My head's never been muddled yet

PYLES (*to JOSEPH*) Here, brother—you better take it

JOSEPH Is it all right, Mr Chisholm?

PYLES (*ashamed for his race*) Listen to him! "Is it all right, Mr Chisholm?" Ain't you heard about the big liberation? Come on—take your drink, weasel!

CHISHOLM Go ahead, Joseph.

JOSEPH Thank you, sir
(*PHYLES hands the drink to JOSEPH, then crosses to the right, and sits down on the bench by the DUKE GRAMP has finished inspection of the policy and is putting it in his pocket*)

SQUIER Do you think it's legal?

GRAMP Seems so to me But I'd like to tell you just one thing, my friend

SQUIER And what is that, Mr Maple?

GRAMP There ain't a woman alive or ever did live that's worth five thousand dollars

SQUIER And let me tell you one thing—you're a forgetful old fool Any woman is worth everything that any man has to give—anguish, ecstasy, faith, jealousy, love, hatred, life or death Don't you see—that's the excuse for our existence? It's what makes the whole thing possible, and tolerable When you've reached my age, you'll learn better sense

MRS CHISHOLM (*to her husband*) Did you hear that?

CHISHOLM (*wearily*) I heard

SQUIER (*to GRAMP*) That lovely girl—that granddaughter of yours—do you know what she is? No—you don't You haven't the remotest idea

GRAMP What is she?

SQUIER She's the future She's the renewal of vitality—and courage—and aspiration—all the strength that has gone out of you Hell—I can't say what she is—but she's essential to me, and the whole damned country, and

the whole miserable world And please, Mrs Chisholm—please don't look at me quizzically I know how I sound

MRS CHISHOLM (*to SQUIER*) I'm wondering if you really believe all that—I mean, about women? (*She has already had one stiff drink and is about to have another*)

SQUIER Of course I do—and there's a man who agrees with me (*Indicating the DUKE*) Don't you, Duke?

DUKE I don't know, pal I wasn't listening

SQUIER Then permit me to speak for you (*He turns again to MRS CHISHOLM*) He could have been over the border long ago, and safe—but he prefers to stay here and risk his life And do you know why?

MRS CHISHOLM Why?

SQUIER Because he has a rendezvous here with a girl Isn't that true, Duke?

DUKE Yes, pal—that's it

MRS CHISHOLM (*to the DUKE*) Do you mean to say you ever have time for romance?

DUKE Not much, lady

SQUIER Certainly he has! Just like the Knights of the Round Table—between dragons

DUKE I guess we're all a lot of saps But I wouldn't be surprised if he was the champion (*He turns to SQUIER*) Did you think I was kidding when I said I'd be glad to knock you off?

SQUIER I hope that neither of us was kidding Did you think I was?

DUKE I just wanted to make sure

PYLES Say! What you talking about?

DUKE Shut up

SQUIER You gave me the idea, Duke, when you called me a low-grade son of a bitch Forgive me, Mrs Chisholm I hope you don't object to that phrase

MRS CHISHOLM Not in the least

DUKE I take it back You're all right, pal You've got good ideas I'll try to fix it so's it won't hurt

SQUIER (*raising his glass*) You're all right, too, Duke I'd like to meet you again some day (*He drinks*)

DUKE Maybe it'll be soon

MRS CHISHOLM You know—this frightful place has suddenly become quite cosy (*She finishes her second drink*)

SQUIER That's my doing, Mrs Chisholm You ought to thank me for having taken it out of the realms of reality

MRS CHISHOLM (*excitedly*) I'm going to see something at last—and after that dreadful dull day looking at cliff dwellings (*She turns to her husband*) Do you realize that we're going to be witnesses at murder? He's actually going to shoot him

SQUIER Sh—please be careful, Mrs Chisholm (*GABBY comes in from the left, followed by JACKIE*) Hello How's Boze?

GABBY He'll be all right

PYLES Did you tie him up good?

JACKIE Yeah—in the bathroom Say, Duke, it's after ten o'clock

PYLES Yeah, boss

DUKE We'll give 'em a few more minutes

SQUIER (*significantly*) A few minutes

DUKE (*with a slight grin*) Not so much more time, pal
(*JACKIE wanders out for a visit with RUBY*)

GABBY Listen, Gramp—I've got an idea we ought to sell out right away, tomorrow It's the best chance we'll ever have, because this place is going to get advertised all over the country and people will be flocking here just to see where Duke Mantee stopped I'll bet Dana Trimble will boost his offer sure (*She is standing by the table at the left*)

GRAMP (*significantly*) You're still aiming to take that trip to France?

GABBY No—the hell with that! I'm asking you to do it for Dad's sake Let him get located in Los Angeles—and maybe I'll find that writer with Warner Brothers, and maybe I'll get a job—and then we'll all be rich

GRAMP Don't sound likely to me

GABBY You can't tell, Gramp There might be a great future for Dad in the Legion That's what he wants, and you ought to give him a whack at it.

SQUIRE And would you be content with that?

GABBY (*savagely*) I'm not thinking about myself! I don't care what happens to me.

SQUIRE But you *must* think about yourself You want to be a great painter, don't you? Then you'll have to get used to being a colossal egoist, selfish to the core

GABBY Are you going to give me more advice? You and your talk about Nature? I thought you told me never to listen to you

SQUIRE I did—but

GABBY Well, that's all the advice I'm going to take (*She turns away from him*)

MRS CHISHOLM Do you mind if I speak up, my dear? Perhaps I could tell you some things that

GABBY What do you know about me?

CHISHOLM Nothing! If I were you, Edith, I'd keep out of

MRS CHISHOLM (*turning on him*) You haven't the remotest conception of what's inside me, and you never have had and never will have as long as you live out your stuffy, astigmatic life (*She turns to GABBY*) I don't know about you, my dear But I know what it means to repress yourself and starve yourself through what you conceive to be your duty to others I've been through that When I was just about your age, I went to Salzburg—because I'd had a nervous breakdown after I came out and I went to a psychoanalyst there and he told me I had every right to

be a great actress He gave me a letter to Max Reinhardt, and I might have played the Nun in "The Miracle" But my family of course started yapping about my obligations to *them*—who had given me everything, including life At least, *they* called it "life" They whisked me back to Dayton, to take my place in the Junior League, and the Country Club, and the D A R—and everything else that's foul and obscene And before I knew it, I was married to *this* pillar of the mortgage, loan and trust And what did *he* do? He took my soul and had it stencilled on a card, and filed And where have I been ever since? In an art metal cabinet That's why I think I have a little right to advise you

CHISHOLM (*closing his tired eyes*). Dear God!

MRS CHISHOLM You needn't look so martyred! You know perfectly well that until this minute I've never complained I've managed to play the part of a self-effacing

CHISHOLM (*his eyes are now open*) Never complained, eh! Forgive me if I indulge in some quiet, mirthless laughter

MRS CHISHOLM What you've wanted is a wife who's an ornamental cipher And, God knows—I've tried and tried to be just that . .

CHISHOLM When?

MRS CHISHOLM I've given you what you wanted—at the cost of my individuality, my self-respect—and—and everything else

CHISHOLM At the cost of nothing! I suppose you've never come storm-

ing into the office and created a scene just when I was straining every faculty to find ways to pay for

(MR CHISHOLM *again shuts his eyes*)

MRS CHISHOLM (*to GABBY*) There—my dear!

CHISHOLM Your insane extravagance

MRS CHISHOLM Be quiet! (CHISHOLM *abandons the argument, as is his wont* MRS CHISHOLM *again to GABBY*) Perhaps you'll understand now what I mean. Profit by my example and realize that perhaps you have something important to give to the world. Don't let them stifle you with their talk about duty. Go to France—and find yourself!

GRAMP Suppose she learns there's nothing there to find?

MRS CHISHOLM Even so—it would be better than endless doubt—which has been my portion. (*She pours herself another drink* GABBY *sits down at the left*)

SQUIER You know—it's the damndest thing about this place. There's something here that stimulates the autobiographical impulse. (*To the DUKE*) What kind of life have you had, Duke?

DUKE. A hell of a life

MRS CHISHOLM I don't believe it

DUKE. Why not, lady?
(JACKIE *returns and sits on a stool at the counter*)

MRS CHISHOLM Because you've had the one supreme satisfaction of knowing that at least you're a real man

DUKE Yeh—that's true. But what has it got me? I've spent most of my time since I grew up in jail, and it looks like I'll spend the rest of my life dead. So what good does it do me to be a real man when you don't get much chance to be crawling into the hay with some dame?

MRS CHISHOLM (*after a slight, thoughtful pause*) I wonder if we could find any hay around here?

CHISHOLM (*past vehemence*) For the love of God, Edith

JACKIE Say! What's been going on here?

SQUIER I'm not sure—but I *think* the Duke has had an offer

MRS CHISHOLM He certainly has! And it was made with all sincerity, too

PYLES Now, listen, boss—don't you go getting into no hay with her. Because we got to lam it out of here

DUKE Thanks very much, lady. When I get settled down in Mexico, maybe I'll send you a postcard, with my address

SQUIER Excuse me, Duke—but how's the time getting along?

DUKE It's just about up, pal

SQUIER (*turning to GABBY*) I must talk to you, Gabrielle

GABBY You can wait until after they're gone

SQUIER I can't wait I mean—when they go—I go I have to tell you now that I love you

GABBY Now listen, Alan I got sort of upset by all that blood, and I don't want to

SQUIER I tell you solemnly that I love you, with all the heart that is left in me

JACKIE Are we waiting just to listen to this?

MRS CHISHOLM He does love you, my dear He told us so

SQUIER Please, Mrs Chisholm I'm capable of saying it (*He turns to GABBY*) Even if I'm not capable of making you believe that I

GABBY Don't make a fool of yourself, Alan They're all staring at you

SQUIER I know they are But you've got to believe it, and you've got to remember it Because—you see—it's my only chance of survival I told you about that major artist, that's been hidden I'm transferring him to you You'll find a line in that verse of Villon's that fits that Something about "Thus in your field my seed of harvestry will thrive" I've provided barren soil for that seed—but you'll give it fertility and growth and fruition

PYLES Listen, boss—I got a wife and four children

MRS CHISHOLM Be quiet—you black gorilla!

PYLES What you call me? (*He rises, his machine-gun at the alert*)

DUKE She pegged you, all right, Pyles Sit down! (*Somewhat reluctantly, PYLES obeys*)

SQUIER You still think I was being comic?

GABBY No, Alan I just think that you—you're kind of crazy And I guess so am I And that's why I think we'd be terribly happy together (*SQUIER looks into her eyes*)

SQUIER Don't say that, Gabnelle

GABBY Why not—when I believe it, with all my heart

SQUIER (*after a moment*) Well—maybe you're right

GABBY You're beginning to admit it

SQUIER Maybe we will be happy together in a funny kind of way

GABBY Alan! (*Impulsively, she goes forward and kneels beside him*)

JACKIE Hey!

DUKE Leave 'em alone!

GABBY Alan! If you're going away, I'm going with you—wherever it is

SQUIER (*taking hold of her hand*) No, Gabnelle I'm not going away, anywhere I don't have to go any farther Because I think I've found the thing I was looking for I've found it—here, in the Valley of the Shadow

GABBY What, Alan? What have you found?

SQUIER. I can't say what it is, Gabrielle. Because I don't quite know, yet! *(He looks into her eyes for a moment, then turns suddenly to the DUKE.)* All right, Duke. We needn't wait any longer.
(Three sharp toots from the Duesenberg are heard.)

DUKE. Watch it, boys!
(PYLES and JACKIE hastily duck out of range of the windows.)

CHISHOLM. What was that?

JOSEPH. It was our horn, Mr Chisholm.
(JACKIE is by the door, DUKE by the right window, PYLES is crouched, covering those in the room.)

JASON'S VOICE. Who's that?

RUBY'S VOICE. Stick up your hands!
(THE DUKE has levelled his machine-gun through the slightly open window.)

DUKE. We got you covered by machine-guns. Open that door, Jackie. Come on, boys. Walk in the front door, and keep 'em up! Cover the door, Jackie.

JACKIE. I got it.

DUKE. Come on! Keep coming!
(JASON comes in, followed by two fellow legionnaires—one, the COMMANDER, a peppery little man, and another who is burly and stupid. All are in the same gaudy uniforms and all look bewildered.)

DUKE. Get those guns, Jackie.
(JACKIE systematically disarms the legionnaires. He tosses the guns into the ammunition sack. RUBY comes to the door.)

RUBY. All clear out here.

DUKE. Is their car in our way?

RUBY. No—it's a good mask.

DUKE. O K. Get back to the car.
(RUBY disappears into the night.)

JASON. Is this a stick-up?

JACKIE. What a guesser!

GRAMP. Say—Jason. That there's Duke Mantee. Been here all evening. He and his gang picked this place out of the whole southwest.

DUKE. What's that uniform you're wearing?

JASON. It's the Ralph M. Kesterling Post of the American Legion.

COMMANDER. I'm the commander of this post, buddy, and I want to tell you that all of us men fought in the World War. You wouldn't shoot us down in cold blood?

JACKIE. *(cheerfully)* Sure we would.

DUKE. Sit down, boys.

ANOTHER LEGIONNAIRE. *(very basso)* Where?

JACKIE. On your cans, Legion.

DUKE. Down there on the floor—in a bunch—and stay there. *(With some little sacrifice of dignity, the LEGIONNAIRES sit down on the floor in a huddle in the centre.)* Why did you come here?

JASON. This is where I live.

GABBY. That's my father.

DUKE Why did you bring the whole regiment with you?

COMMANDER We were trailing you And by God we caught up with

JASON Shut up, Commander The less we talk the better for all concerned

JACKIE Some legion! Out gunning for the bad men—and look at 'em now!

DUKE What made you think I'd be around here?

COMMANDER They caught your pals

OTHER Three men and a blonde

PYLES Don't you try to go get 'em out now, boss!

DUKE Where was it? (*There is no repl*) DUKE *continues with unwonted ferocity*) Come on—tell me—or I'll tear holes a yard wide in them pansy uniforms!

JASON They caught 'em at Buckhorn

DUKE Where's that?
(PYLES *pulls the map from his pocket*)

OTHER It's in New Mexico—'bout ninety—hundred miles southeast of here

DUKE. When?

JASON I don't know

COMMANDER We heard about it half an hour ago Every man in this state

that can bear arms has turned out to .

PYLES Here it is, boss Buckhorn—on Route 11

JACKIE How'd they get 'em?

COMMANDER It was the regular army!

OTHER Your friends run right into a troop of the U S Cavalry

JASON I warn you, Mantee—you'd better get out of here, for your own good

DUKE Is anybody else coming this way?

JASON I don't know I swear to God I don't But there are posses all around here, and I don't want to get this place shot up

COMMANDER You got the whole mighty strength of this nation after you now, buddy

JACKIE Listen, Legion—when we're got it will be by *real* cops—not by any overgrown Boy Scouts in fancy dress

JASON All right—you can talk big, if you want to But I'll tell you that the woman in that car has been doing some talking

DUKE (*after a moment*) What?

JACKIE It was Dons She snitched. They always snitch!

DUKE Shut up! (*To JASON*) What were you saying?

JASON I'm telling you for your own good, Mantee—they know where you

were heading—they've picked up your trail—and they'll get you

JACKIE She has snatched! Come on, Duke!

SQUIER Don't listen to them, Duke! (SQUIER is leaning forward, watching the DUKE with great intentness. He sees that the DUKE, for once, has been propelled into a state of turbulence, agonized indecision.)

PYLES Come on, boss—or we're all dead

COMMANDER The law's closing in on you!

JACKIE What's the matter with you, Duke? Why the hell don't you

DUKE (with sudden savagery) For Christ's sake, shut up! Shut up! Give me time to think

SQUIER (urgently) No, Duke—don't waste any time thinking. That isn't your game. Don't listen to what they're telling you. You've got to keep going and going and going—

PYLES Yeah—and go fast

JACKIE You've been double-crossed and bitched, and the next thing you'll be layed flat on a marble slab

DUKE Where'd they take her?

JASON I don't know. Maybe to Albuquerque

JACKIE If we head for there, they'll take us!

SQUIER You want revenge, don't you! You want to go out of your way again to get that blonde who

snatched. Don't do it, Luke. Even if she did betray you, don't you commit a worse crime. Don't betray yourself. Go on, run for the border—and take your illusions with you!

JACKIE He's right, Duke!

DUKE I told you to shut up! (He says that to JACKIE, but he is looking hard at SQUIER, who is talking with passionate earnestness.)

SQUIER You know they're going to get you, anyway. You're obsolete, Duke—like me. You've got to die. Then die for freedom. That's worth it. Don't give up your life for anything so cheap and unsatisfactory as revenge.

PYLES I hear a car coming, boss. We better lam. (The DUKE looks at SQUIER curiously, for a moment.)

DUKE All right, pal. I'm going. Now, listen, folks, we've had a pleasant evening here and I'd hate to spoil it with any killing at the finish. So stay where you are until we're out of sight, because we'll be watching. Better cut that phone wire, Jackie. Pack up the ammunition, Pyles. (PYLES and JACKIE are galvanized into action.)

SQUIER Wait a minute! You're not forgetting me?

(JACKIE is opening his knife, PYLES is picking up the ammunition sack, and DUKE is covering all, when the Duesenberg horn is heard again. DUKE, PYLES and JACKIE duck.)

DUKE (peering out the window) Car's stopped out in the road. There's a guy with a rifle.

PYLES Cops?

DUKE Looks like it

JACKIE Hicks or G's?

DUKE Hicks Lay low!

COMMANDER It's the Shenff! He's got you, Mantee!

JASON I warned you! You'd better surrender now before they start
(A burst of machine-gun fire is heard from the left)

PYLES That's Ruby shooting

DUKE The God-damn fool Get out there to that window, Jackie, and tell him to hold his fire We don't want 'em drilling that car (JACKIE starts to go) Wait! Tell him to open up if they try to drift around that side

JACKIE O K (Stooped over, he goes to the door at the lower left and out)

JASON You have no right to endanger the lives of innocent people You'd better surrender

DUKE Get behind that counter, Pyles And keep this mob in here covered

PYLES O K, boss (He crouches on the left end of the counter The DUKE is marvellously alert, crouching by the window, the muzzle of his gun thrust out) What they doing now, boss?

(The DUKE delivers a short burst of machine-gun fire out the window)

DUKE They're crawling into the sagebrush the other side of the road Where are them pans?

PYLES The sack's right there beside you (A shot from outside shatters one of the window panes) Boy—I knowed this place wasn't safe!
(Wails are heard from PAULA, off at the left)

DUKE You folks better get down Lie down all of you close together in the middle Watch 'em, Pyles

PYLES I'm watching!
(All hasten to obey, so that they are lying flat on their stomachs, close together JACKIE returns)

JACKIE O K, Duke

DUKE Where's the light switch?

GRAMP To the right of the door

DUKE Turn 'em out, Jackie
(JACKIE turns out the lights)

CHISHOLM (to his wife) Do you want any hay now?
(The strip of faces and feet of the prone is illumined by the glow of light from the door at the right Through the windows and the panes of the door come bright moonlight and the green Neon gleam to illumine, dimly, the DUKE and JACKIE)

DUKE Get to the kitchen door, Jackie Hold your fire, unless they try to rush it They'll try to work around that direction to the shadow of that mesa It's their only cover When they get around there, we'll lam

JACKIE How many are there?

DUKE Six or seven Nothing to worry about (Another shot from outside) When enough of 'em get across that road, give 'em a couple

of bursts to scare 'em and then snap back here. And watch yourself, kid!

JACKIE O K, Duke (*He crosses the line of bodies*)

COMMANDER Ouch!

(*Still another shot from outside breaks a window JACKIE has gone out at the left BOZE's voice can be heard shouting "Let me out of here! Let me out of here!" PAULA can be heard wailing prayers and imprecations in Spanish*)

DUKE Keeping 'em covered, Pyles?

PYLES I got 'em, boss! I got 'em!

(*The subsequent dialogue is punctuated with shots from outside and bursts from DUKE's Tommy-gun*)

SQUIER It's an inspiring moment—isn't it, Gabrielle? The United States of America versus Duke Mantee!
(*A volley from the SHERIFF's posse and the Neon light goes out*)

JASON They've absolutely wrecked the Neon!

GRAMP It's them deputies shooting. Probably all drunk.

SQUIER It almost restores in me the will to live—and love—and conquer.

CHISHOLM Listen, Edith—if I'm killed

MRS CHISHOLM What did you say?

CHISHOLM I said—if I'm killed—and you're not notify Jack Lavery. He has full instructions.

MRS CHISHOLM (*turning away*)
All right

COMMANDER Hey—Mantee . . . you're not going to let 'em rush us, are you?

(*The DUKE replies with another burst*)

PYLES Getting any of 'em, boss?

DUKE Can't get a good angle on 'em. But they're drifting over—and Jackie'll get 'em.

SQUIER I feel as if I were sitting on top of a mountain in the middle of Penguin Island. Watching watching the odd little creatures (*MRS CHISHOLM starts to hum*). How do you feel about it, darling?

GABBY I don't know, Alan. And I don't care.

JASON I wish to God you'd stop that praying.

MRS CHISHOLM I'm not praying—I'm singing!

(*By now it is apparent that the attackers have been drifting over, the sound of shots comes more from the left*)

PYLES Why ain't Jackie shooting?

DUKE The kid knows what he's doing.

COMMANDER If you let 'em rush us it'll be a massacre.

GABBY Alan Alan—when you get to France what do you see first?

SQUIER Customs Officers.

GABBY But what's the first real sight you see?

SQUIER. The fields and forests of Normandy and then .

GABBY What, Alan?

SQUIER And then Paris

PYLES I better tell Jackie to open up

DUKE Stay where you are

GABBY Paris! That's the most marvellous place in the world for love—Isn't it?

SQUIER All places are marvellous

GABBY Even here

SQUIER Especially here, my darling

JOSEPH (*swaying and chanting*) Oh, Lord! Oh, Lord! It is the judgment of thy wrath on these thy poor sinful children
(*More wails from PAULA and shouts from BOZE*)

JASON The next thing you know those gas pumps will be up in flames

SQUIER As long as I live—I'll be grateful to the Duke

GABBY Alan Alan will you please kiss me? (*He kisses her*)
(*The DUKE delivers a final prolonged burst, then turns from the window*)

DUKE O K, Pyles We're pulling out Get Jackie
(*PYLES ducks into the kitchen The shooting from the left is now intense*)

SQUIER Oh, Lord— Now it's going to be all over.

GABBY (*clinging to him*) Not for us, Alan—never—

PYLES (*returning*) Jackie's got killed

DUKE How the hell did he do that?

PYLES I don't know, boss

DUKE Well—we got to leave him You and you and you and you are coming with us to hang on the running board We got to have shields
(*He has designated the CHISHOLMS, JOSEPH and the two LEGIONNAIRES*)

CHISHOLM Me?

MRS CHISHOLM All right! All right! I don't care what happens to me now I don't care a bit!

COMMANDER For God's sake, Buddy, don't let us get shot down like

JOSEPH Oh, Lord God of Abraham Oh, Holy Lord

OTHER LEGIONNAIRE This is the country I was ready to die for .
(*The foregoing is all jumbled together*)

GRAMP Me, too?

DUKE No, not you, Pop Come on, on your feet Get moving out through that door They won't shoot at you! You won't none of you get hurt if you keep your hands up and make plenty of noise Come on—keep moving!

PYLES And we're in one hell of a hurry (*He is herding them out Their hands are up and they are shouting lustily*)

ALL Don't shoot— Don't shoot For God's sake, Buddies, don't shoot!
(The DUKE is in the doorway, a crouched silhouette against the moonlit desert. His machine-gun is under his left arm, his revolver in his right hand.)

DUKE *(to those remaining)* You'd better stay where you are for a while. Good night, folks

SQUIER *(springing to his feet)* Duke!

GABBY Alan! Keep down!

SQUIER Duke!

DUKE Do you still want it?

SQUIER *(desperately)* It's no matter whether I want it or not. You've got to

DUKE O K, pal *(He shoots SQUIER spins against the lunch counter GABBY screams)* I'll be seeing you soon *(He goes)*

GRAMP God Almighty! He meant it!

(GABBY rushes to SQUIER. There are more wails from PAULA and shouts from BOZE, but the shooting has stopped.)

JASON Keep down!
(The motor of the car is heard starting. The door at the left bursts open and the SHERIFF comes in, holding a rifle. Behind him are HERB and two DEPUTIES, with rifles, pistols, shotguns.)

SHERIFF Where'd they go?

JASON *(rising)* Out there

HERB *(full of enthusiasm and moon)* Let's get 'em, Sheriff! Come on, fellers—we'll shoot 'em dead!
(The SHERIFF starts for the door, and bumps into JASON.)

GABBY Gramp! Go get Boze. He knows about first aid.
(GRAMP goes out at the left.)

SHERIFF Get out of my way, you clumsy *(The SHERIFF goes out the front door, followed by the DEPUTIES and HERB. They take cover, and raise their rifles.)*

JASON Those are innocent people on the running board! *(He switches on the lights.)*

HERB Never mind 'em. Let's shoot the hell out of 'em! *(He shoots.)*

SHERIFF God damn! Come on. We'll go after 'em. *(He runs out of sight.)*

VOICE OF ANOTHER DEPUTY Can't drive that car. The tires are all shot.

SHERIFF'S VOICE Here's a car we can take.

JASON Wait a minute. That's my car! You've done enough damage to my property.

HERB'S VOICE Ah—shut up.
(SQUIER lurches toward the center table. GABBY steadies him and helps him to slump down into a chair.)

SQUIER It doesn't hurt—or, at least, it doesn't seem. It went into this lung, I think. *(He leans forward on the table.)*

GABBY It's all right, Alan.

SQUIER It isn't all right, Gabrielle. I'm practically dead.

GABBY Nol Alan! You said you wanted to live

SQUIER I know I did . .

GABBY And I'll live with you I will!

SQUIER (*looking up at her and smiling, feebly*) I know I said it I was blundered, then But now I can see .

GABBY (*shouting*) Boze! Gramp! Somebody! Come here quick!

SQUIER. They were right, Gabrielle

I mean the stars I had to come all this way—to find a reason Oh, —if people only had guts enough, they'd always find . (*He covers his eyes with his hand*) Death is funny-looking when . The Duke —understood what it was—I wanted

I hope you'll— (*His arms are stretched out on the table and his head has been sinking until it rests between them*)

GABBY What, Alan? What did you say? (*She takes hold of his shoulder and, frantically, shakes him*) Alan

(*He is finally silent Her lip quivers, but she tightens her face*) No—don't worry, Alan I'm not going to be a God-damned cry-baby about it I know you died happy

Didn't you, Alan? Didn't you? (*After a moment, BOZE comes in, followed by GRAMP BOZE's right hand is in a blood-stained bandage*)

BOZE Are you all right, old kid?

GABBY. I guess he's dead

GRAMP Sure he is Mantee couldn't have missed twice

BOZE Damned tough He was a good guy, at that
(*A wail from PAULA is again heard*)

GABBY It's Paula Go in and let her out

(*BOZE goes out at the left GRAMP takes the insurance policy from his pocket*)

GRAMP Listen, Gabby—here's the funny thing His life insurance for five thousand bernies He made it out to you, and it looks regular Said he wanted you to spend it on a trip to France to see your mother Of course, I don't know if it's collectible, but by God, I'm going to get it to Summerfield in the morning (*He puts the policy back in his pocket*) He was the damnedest feller I ever did see (*He turns and crosses to the left and sits down in his rocking chair*) Couldn't make him out
(*JASON comes in quickly*)

JASON Mantee let 'em off the car 'bout a quarter of a mile up the road You can see 'em walking back (*He sees SQUIER*) Has he—

GRAMP Yep—he's gone

JASON (*removing his cap*) Poo feller Well—he died a hero's death We'll give him an honorable funeral

GABBY We'll bury him out there in the petrified forest

JASON What?

GABBY That's what he wanted

GRAMP Yes—by God—he said so
(*JASON starts up to the telephone behind the counter*)

JASON Well, maybe his next of kin will have something to say about that

I've got to 'phone the Sheriff's office. They'll never catch Mantee with my car—unless he wrecks that Duesenberg. Hello—Hello—get me the Sheriff's office in Morenci. Yeh

(GABBY is still standing close to SQUIER, her hands on his shoulder)

GABBY (almost to herself)

"Thus in your field my seed of
harvestry will thrive—
For the fruit is like me that I
set—"

(BOZE comes in, from the kitchen, laughing)

BOZE Boy—it did me good to see that Jackie in a pool of blood.

GABBY (louder, almost defiantly).

"God bids me tend it with good husbandry

This is the end for which we twain are met."

JASON Hello—who's this Oh—hello, Ernie

BOZE (wildly) Don't keep staring at him

JASON Jason Maple. Say—Mantee was here and escaped South in a yellow Duesenberg, Ohio license plate Sheriff went after him, but you got to watch Route 71 and send out the alarm to watch Route 60 Yes—we had quite some shooting here

(During this speech the curtain has fallen)

Waiting for Lefty

BY CLIFFORD ODETS

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Waiting for Lefty was first produced at the Longacre Theatre, New York City, by the Group Theatre, on March 26, 1935, and closed on September 28, 1935. Following is the original cast:

| | |
|--------------|--|
| FATT | Russell Collins |
| JOE | Lewis Leverett |
| EDNA | Ruth Nelson |
| MILLER | Gerrit Kraber |
| FAYETTE | Russell Collins |
| IRV | Walter Coy |
| FLORRIE | Paula Miller |
| SID | Herbert Ratner |
| CLAYTON | Bob Lewis |
| AGATE KELLER | Elia Kazan |
| HENCHMAN | Abner Biberman |
| SECRETARY | Dorothy Patten |
| ACTOR | William Challee |
| REILLY | Russell Collins |
| DR. BARNES | Roman Bohnen |
| DR. BENJAMIN | Clifford Odets |
| A MAN | George Heller |
| VOICES | Sam Roland, Lee J. Cobb, Wendell Keith Phillips, Harry Stone, Bernard Zanville |

WAITING FOR LEFTY

As the curtain goes up we see a bare stage. On it are sitting six or seven men in a semicircle. Lolling against the proscenium down left is a young man chewing a toothpick, a gunman. A fat man of porcine appearance is talking directly to the audience. In other words he is the head of a union and the men ranged behind him are a committee of workers. They are now seated in interesting different attitudes and present a wide diversity of type, as we shall soon see. The fat man is hot and heavy under the collar, near the end of a long talk, but not too hot; he is well fed and confident. His name is HARRY FATT.

FATT You're so wrong I ain't laughing. Any guy with eyes to read knows it. Look at the textile strike—out like lions and in like lambs. Take the San Francisco tie-up—starvation and broken heads. The steel boys wanted to walk out too, but they changed their minds. It's the trend of the times, that's what it is. All we workers got a good man behind us now. He's top man of the country—looking out for our interests—the man in the White House is the one I'm referin' to. That's why the times ain't ripe for a strike. He's working day and night—

VOICE (from the audience) For who?
(The GUNMAN stirs himself.)

FATT For you! The records prove it. If this was the Hoover régime, would I say don't go out, boys? Not on your tintype! But things is different now. You read the papers as well as me. You know it. And that's why I'm against the strike. Because we gotta stand behind the man who's standin' behind us! The whole country—

ANOTHER VOICE Is on the blink!
(The GUNMAN looks grave.)

FATT Stand up and show yourself, you damn red! Be a man, let's see what you look like! (*Waits in vain*) Yellow from the word go! Red and yellow makes a dirty color, boys. I got my eyes on four or five of them in the union here. What the hell'll they do for you? Pull you out and run away when trouble starts. Give those birds a chance and they'll have your sisters and wives in the whore houses, like they done in Russia. They'll tear Christ off his bleeding cross. They'll wreck your homes and throw your babies in the river. You think that's bunk? Read the papers! Now listen, we can't stay here all night. I gave you the facts in the case. You boys got hot suppers to go to and—

ANOTHER VOICE Says you!

GUNMAN Sit down, Punk!

ANOTHER VOICE Where's Lefty?
(Now this question is taken up by the others in unison. FATT pounds with gavel.)

FATT That's what I wanna know. Where's your pal, Lefty? You elected him chairman—where the hell did he disappear?

VOICES We want Lefty! Lefty! Lefty!

FATT (*pounding*) What the hell is this—a circus? You got the committee here This bunch of cowboys you elected (*Pointing to man on extreme right end*)

MAN Benjamin

FATT Yeah, Doc Benjamin (*Pointing to other men in circle in seated order*) Benjamin, Miller, Stein, Mitchell, Phillips, Keller It ain't my fault Lefty took a run-out powder If you guys—

A GOOD VOICE What's the committee say?

OTHERS The committee! Let's hear from the committee! (*FATT tries to quiet the crowd, but one of the seated men suddenly comes to the front The GUNMAN moves over to center stage, but FATT says*)

FATT Sure, let him talk Let's hear what the red boys gotta say! (*Various shouts are coming from the audience FATT insolently goes back to his seat in the middle of the circle He sits on his raised platform and relights his cigar The GUNMAN goes back to his post JOE, the new speaker, raises his hand for quiet Gets it quickly He is sore*)

JOE You boys know me I ain't a red boy one bit! Here I'm carryin' a shrapnel that big I picked up in the

war And maybe I don't know it when it rains! Don't tell me red! You know what we are? The black and blue boys! We been lucked around so long we're black and blue from head to toes But I guess anyone who says straight out he don't like it, he's a red boy to the leaders of the union What's this crap about goin' home to hot suppers? I'm asking to your faces how many's got hot suppers to go home to? Anyone who's sure of his next meal, raise your hand! A certain gent sitting behind me can raise them both But not in front here! And that's why we're talking strike—to get a living wage!

VOICE. Where's Lefty?

JOE I honest to God don't know, but he didn't take no run-out powder That Wop's got more guts than a slaughterhouse Maybe a traffic jam got him, but he'll be here But don't let this red stuff scare you Unless fighting for a living scares you We gotta make up our minds My wife made up my mind last week, if you want the truth It's plain as the nose on Sol Feinberg's face we need a strike There's us comin' home every night—eight, ten hours on the cab "God," the wife says, "eighty cents ain't money—don't buy beans almost You're workin' for the company," she says to me, "Joe! you ain't workin' for me or the family no more!" She says to me, "If you don't start "

I JOE AND EDNA

The lights fade out and a white spot picks out the playing space within the space of seated men The seated men are very dimly visible in the outer dark but more prominent is FATT smoking his cigar and often blowing the smoke in the lighted circle

A tired but attractive woman of thirty comes into the room, drying her hands on an apron. She stands there sullenly as JOE comes in from the other side, home from work. For a moment they stand and look at each other in silence.

JOE Where's all the furniture, honey?

EDNA No you won't

EDNA They took it away. No install-
ments paid

JOE (*sheepish*) Jeez, Edna, you get
me sore some time.

JOE When?

EDNA But just look at me—I'm
laughing all over!

EDNA Three o'clock

JOE They can't do that

JOE Don't insult me. Can I help it if
times are bad? What the hell do you
want me to do, jump off a bridge or
something?

EDNA Can't? They did it

JOE Why, the palookas, we paid
three-quarters

EDNA Don't yell. I just put the kids
to bed so they won't know they
missed a meal. If I don't have Emmy's
shoes soled tomorrow, she can't go
to school. In the meantime let her
sleep.

EDNA The man said read the con-
tract

JOE We must have signed a
phony.

JOE Honey, I rode the wheels off
the chariot today. I cruised around
five hours without a call. It's condi-
tions.

EDNA It's a regular contract and you
signed it

JOE Don't be so sour, Edna.
(*Tries to embrace her.*)

EDNA Tell it to the A & P!

EDNA Do it in the movies, Joe—they
pay Clark Gable big money for it

JOE I booked two-twenty on the
clock. A lady with a dog was lit
she gave me a quarter tip by mistake.
If you'd only listen to me—we're roll-
ing in wealth.

JOE This is a helluva house to come
home to. Take my word!

EDNA Yeah? How much?

EDNA Take MY word! Whose fault
is it?

JOE I had "coffee and—" in a bean-
ery (*Hands her silver coins*). A buck
four.

JOE Must you start that stuff again?

EDNA Maybe you'd like to talk about
books?

EDNA The second month's rent is
due tomorrow.

JOE I'd like to slap you in the mouth!

JOE Don't look at me that way, Edna.

EDNA I'm looking through you, not at you Everything was gonna be so ducky! A cottage by the waterfall, roses in Picardy You're a four-star bust! If you think I'm standing for it much longer, you're crazy as a bed-bug

JOE I'd get another job if I could There's no work—you know it

EDNA I only know we're at the bottom of the ocean

JOE What can I do?

EDNA Who's the man in the family, you or me?

JOE That's no answer Get down to brass tacks Christ, gumme a break, too! A coffee cake and java all day I'm hungry, too, Babe I'd work my fingers to the bone if—

EDNA I'll open a can of salmon

JOE Not now. Tell me what to do!

EDNA I'm not God!

JOE Jeez I wish I was a kid again and didn't have to think about the next minute.

EDNA But you're not a kid and you do have to think about the next minute You got two blondie kids sleeping in the next room They need food and clothes I'm not mentioning anything else—But we're stalled like a flivver in the snow For five years I laid awake at night listening to my heart pound For God's sake, do something, Joe, get wise Maybe get your buddies together, maybe go on strike for better money Poppa did it during the war and they won out I'm turning into a sour old nag

JOE (*defending himself*) Strikes don't work!

EDNA Who told you?

JOE Besides that means not a nickel a week while we're out Then when it's over they don't take you back

EDNA Suppose they don't? What's to lose?

JOE Well, we're averaging six-seven dollars a week now

EDNA That just pays for the rent

JOE That is something, Edna

EDNA It isn't They'll push you down to three and four a week before you know it Then you'll say, "That's somethin'," too!

JOE There's too many cabs on the street, that's the whole damn trouble

EDNA Let the company worry about that, you big fool! If their cabs didn't make a profit, they'd take them off the streets Or maybe you think they're in business just to pay Joe Mitchell's rent!

JOE You don't know a-b-c, Edna

EDNA I know this—your boss is making suckers outa you boys every minute Yes, and suckers out of all the wives and the poor innocent kids who'll grow up with crooked spines and sick bones Sure, I see it in the papers, how good orange juice is for kids But dammit our kids get colds one on top of the other They look like little ghosts Betty never saw a grapefruit I took her to the store last week and she pointed to a stack of grapefruits "What's that!" she

and My God, Joe—the world is supposed to be for all of us

JOE You'll wake them up.

EDNA I don't care, as long as I can maybe wake you up

JOE Don't insult me One man can't make a strike

EDNA Who says one? You got hundreds in your rotten union!

JOE The union ain't rotten

EDNA No? Then what are they doing? Collecting dues and patting your back?

JOE They're making plans

EDNA What kind?

JOE They don't tell us

EDNA It's too damn bad about you They don't tell little Joey what's happening in his bitsie witsie union What do you think it is—a ping pong game?

JOE You know they're racketeers The guys at the top would shoot you for a nickel

EDNA Why do you stand for that stuff?

JOE Don't you wanna see me alive?

EDNA (after a deep pause) No I don't think I do, Joe Not if you can lift a finger to do something about it, and don't No, I don't care

JOE Honey, you don't understand what—

EDNA And any other hackie that won't fight let them all be ground to hamburger!

JOE It's one thing to—

EDNA Take your hand away! Only they don't grind me to little pieces! I got different plans (Starts to take off her apron)

JOE Where are you going?

EDNA None of your business.

JOE What's up your sleeve?

EDNA My arm'd be up my sleeve darling if I had a sleeve to wear, (Puts neatly folded apron on back of chair)

JOE Tell me!

EDNA Tell you what?

JOE Where are you going?

EDNA Don't you remember my old boy friend?

JOE Who?

EDNA Bud Haas He still has my picture in his watch He earns a living

JOE What the hell are you talking about?

EDNA I heard worse than I'm talking about

JOE Have you seen Bud since we got married?

EDNA Maybe

JOE If I thought
looking at her)

(He stands

EDNA You don't scare me that much!
(Indicates a half inch on her finger)

EDNA See much? Listen, boy friend,
if you think I won't do this it just
means you can't see straight

JOE This is what I slaved for!

EDNA Tell it to your boss!

JOE Stop talking bull!

JOE He don't give a damn for you
or me!

EDNA This isn't five years ago, Joe

EDNA That's what I say

JOE You mean you'd leave me and
the kids?

JOE Don't change the subject!

EDNA I'd leave you like a shot!

EDNA This is the subject, the EX-
ACT SUBJECT! Your boss makes
this subject I never saw him in my
life, but he's putting ideas in my
head a mile a minute He's giving
your kids that fancy disease called the
rickets He's making a jellyfish outa
you and putting wrinkles in my face
This is the subject every inch of
the way! He's throwing me into Bud
Haas' lap When in hell will you
get wise—

JOE No

JOE I'm not so dumb as you think!
But you are talking like a Red

EDNA Yes!

(JOE turns away, sitting in a chair
with his back to her Outside the
lighted circle of the playing stage we
hear the other seated members of the
strike committee "She will she
will it happens that way," etc
This group should be used through-
out for various comments, political,
emotional and as general chorus
Whispering The fat boss now
blows a heavy cloud of smoke into
the scene)

EDNA I don't know what that means
But when a man knocks you down
you get up and kiss his fist! You
gutless piece of baloney

JOE (finally) Well, I guess I ain't
got a leg to stand on

JOE One man can't—

EDNA No?

JOE (suddenly mad) No, you lousy
tart, no! Get the hell out of here Go
pick up that bull-thrower on the
corner and stop at some cushy hotel
downtown He's probably been com-
ing here every morning and laying
you while I hacked my guts out!

EDNA (with great joy) I don't say
one man! I say a hundred, a thou-
sand, a whole million, I say But start
in your own union Get those hack
boys together! Sweep out those racket-
eers like a pile of dirt! Stand up like
men and fight for the crying kids
and wives God damn it! I'm tired of
slavery and sleepless nights

EDNA You're crawling like a worm!

JOE (with her) Sure, sure! . . .

JOE You'll be crawling in a minute

EDNA Yes Get brass toes on your shoes and know where to kick!

JOE (suddenly jumping up and kissing his wife full on the mouth) Listen, Edna, I'm goin' down to 174th Street to look up Lefty Costello Lefty was saying the other day (He suddenly stops) How about this Haas guy?

EDNA Get out of here!

JOE I'll be back! (Runs out)
(For a moment EDNA stands triumphant)

(There is a blackout and when the regular lights come up, JOE MITCHELL is concluding what he has been saying)

JOE You guys know this stuff better than me We gotta walk out! (Abruptly he turns and goes back to his seat and blackout)

II LAB ASSISTANT EPISODE

Discovered MILLER, a lab assistant, looking around, and FAYETTE, an industrialist

FAY Like it?

MILLER Very much I've never seen an office like this outside the movies

FAY Yes, I often wonder if interior decorators and bathroom fixture people don't get all their ideas from Hollywood Our country's extraordinary that way Soap, cosmetics, electric refrigerators—just let Mrs. Consumer know they're used by the Crawfords and Garbos—more volume of sale than one plant can handle!

MILL I'm afraid it isn't that easy, Mr Fayette

FAY No, you're right—gross exaggeration on my part Competition is cutthroat today Markets up flush against a stone wall The astronomers had better hurry—open Mars to trade expansion

MILL Or it will be just too bad!

FAY Cigar?

MILL Thank you, don't smoke

FAY Drink?

MILL Dito, Mr Fayette

FAY I like sobriety in my workers the trained ones, I mean The Pollacks and niggers, they're better drunk—keeps them out of mischief Wondering why I had you come over?

MILL If you don't mind my saying—very much

FAY (patting him on the knee) I like your work

MILL Thanks

FAY No reason why a talented young man like yourself shouldn't string along with us—a growing concern

Loyalty is well repaid in our organization Did you see Siegfried this morning?

MILL He hasn't been in the laboratory all day

FAY I told him yesterday to raise you twenty dollars a month Starts this week

MILL You don't know how happy my wife'll be

FAY Oh, I can appreciate it (*He laughs*)

MILL Was that all, Mr Fayette?

FAY Yes, except that we're switching you to laboratory A tomorrow Siegfried knows about it That's why I had you in The new work is very important Siegfried recommended you very highly as a man to trust You'll work directly under Dr Brenner Make you happy?

MILL Very He's an important chemist!

FAY (*leaning over seriously*) We think so, Miller We think so to the extent of asking you to stay within the building throughout the time you work with him

MILL You mean sleep and eat in?

FAY Yes

MILL It can be arranged

FAY Fine You'll go far, Miller

MILL May I ask the nature of the new work?

FAY (*looking around first*) Poison gas . .

MILL Poison!

FAY Orders from above I don't have to tell you from where New type poison gas for modern warfare

MILL I see

FAY You didn't know a new war was that close, did you?

MILL I guess I didn't

FAY I don't have to stress the importance of absolute secrecy

MILL I understand!

FAY The world is an armed camp today One match sets the whole world blazing in forty-eight hours Uncle Sam won't be caught napping!

MILL (*addressing his pencil*) They say 12 million men were killed in that last one and 20 million more wounded or missing

FAY That's not our worry If big business went sentimental over human life there wouldn't be big business of any sort!

MILL My brother and two cousins went in the last one

FAY They died in a good cause

MILL. My mother says "no!"

FAY She won't worry about you this time You're too valuable behind the front

MILL That's right.

FAY All right, Miller See Siegfried for further orders

MILL. You should have seen my brother—he could ride a bike without hands

FAY You'd better move some clothes and shaving tools in tomorrow. Remember what I said—you're with a growing organization

MILL He could run the hundred yards in 9 8 flat

FAY Who?

MILL My brother He's in the Meuse-Argonne Cemetery Momma went there in 1926

FAY Yes, those things stick How's your handwriting, Miller, fairly legible?

MILL Fairly so

FAY Once a week I'd like a little report from you

MILL What sort of report?

FAY Just a few hundred words once a week on Dr Brenner's progress

MILL Don't you think it might be better coming from the Doctor?

FAY I didn't ask you that

MILL Sorry

FAY I want to know what progress he's making, the reports to be purely confidential—between you and me

MILL You mean I'm to watch him?

FAY Yes!

MILL I guess I can't do that . . .

FAY Thirty a month raise . .

MILL You said twenty

FAY Thirty!

MILL Guess I'm not built that way

FAY Forty

MILL Spying's not in my line, Mr. Fayette!

FAY You use ugly words, Mr Miller!

MILL For ugly activity? Yes!

FAY Think about it, Miller Your chances are excellent

MILL No

FAY You're doing something for your country Assuring the United States that when those God-damn Japs start a ruckus we'll have offensive weapons to back us up! Don't you read your newspapers, Miller?

MILL Nothing but Andy Gump

FAY If you were on the inside you'd know I'm talking cold sober truth! Now, I'm not asking you to make up your mind on the spot Think about it over your lunch period

MILL No

FAY Made up your mind already?

MILL Afraid so

FAY You understand the consequences?

MILL I lose my raise—

FAY It's up to you.

(Simultaneously) { MILL And my job!
FAY And your job!
MILL You misunderstand—

MILL My mind's made up.

FAY No hard feelings?

MILL Rather dig ditches first!

MILL Sure hard feelings! I'm not the civilized type, Mr Fayette Nothing suave or sophisticated about me Plenty of hard feelings! Enough to want to bust you and all your kind square in the mouth!
(Does exactly that)

FAY That's a job for foreigners

MILL But sneaking—and making poison gas—that's for Americans?

BLACKOUT

III THE YOUNG HACK AND HIS GIRL

Opens with girl and brother FLORENCE waiting for SID to take her to a dance

FLOR I gotta right to have something out of life I don't smoke, I don't drink So if Sid wants to take me to a dance, I'll go Maybe if you was in love you wouldn't talk so hard.

IRV I'm saying it for your good

FLOR Don't be so good to me

IRV Mom's sick in bed and you'll be worryin' her to the grave She don't want that boy hanging around the house and she don't want you meetin' him in Crotona Park

FLOR I'll meet him anytime I like!

IRV If you do, yours truly'll take care of it in his own way With just one hand, too!

FLOR Why are you all so set against him?

IRV Mom told you ten times—it ain't him It's that he ain't got nothing Sure, we know he's serious, that he's stuck on you But that don't cut no ice

FLOR Taxi drivers used to make good money

IRV Today they're makin' five and six dollars a week Maybe you wanta raise a family on that Then you'll be back here living with us again and I'll be supporting two families in one Well over my dead body

FLOR Irv, I don't care—I love him!

IRV You're a little kid with half-baked ideas!

FLOR I stand there behind the counter the whole day I think about him—

IRV If you thought more about Mom it would be better

FLOR Don't I take care of her every night when I come home? Don't I cook supper and iron your shirts and you give me a pain in the neck, too Don't try to shut me up! I bring a few dollars in the house, too Don't you see I want something else out of life Sure, I want romance, love, babies I want everything in life I can get

IRV You take care of Mom and watch your step!

FLOR And if I don't?

IRV Yours truly'll watch it for you!

FLOR You can talk that way to a girl!

IRV I'll talk that way to your boy friend, too, and it won't be with words! Florrie, if you had a pair of eyes you'd see it's for your own good we're talking This ain't no time to get married Maybe later—

FLOR "Maybe later" never comes for me, though Why don't we send Mom to a hospital? She can die in peace there instead of looking at the clock on the mantelpiece all day

IRV That needs money Which we don't have!

FLOR Money, Money, Money!

IRV Don't change the subject

FLOR This is the subject!

IRV You gonna stop seeing him? *(She turns away)* Jesus, kiddie, I remember when you were a baby with

curls down your back Now I gotta stand here yellin' at you like this

FLOR I'll talk to him, Irv.

IRV When?

FLOR I asked him to come here tonight We'll talk it over

IRV Don't get soft with him Nowa-days is no time to be soft You gotta be hard as a rock or go under

FLOR I found that out There's the bell Take the egg off the stove I boiled for Mom Leave us alone, Irv *(SID comes in—the two men look at each other for a second IRV exits)*

SID *(enters)* Hello, Florrie

FLOR Hello, Honey You're looking tired

SID Naw, I just need a shave

FLOR Well, draw your chair up to the fire and I'll ring for brandy and soda like in the movies

SID If this was the movies I'd bring a big bunch of roses

FLOR How big?

SID Fifty or sixty dozen—the kind with long, long stems—big as that . .

FLOR You dope

SID Your Paris gown is beautiful

FLOR *(acting grandly)* Yes, Percy, velvet panels are coming back again Madame La Farge told me today that Queen Marie herself designed it

SID Gee . . . !

FLOR Every princess in the Balkans is wearing one like this (Poses grandly)

SID Hold it (Does a nose camera—thumbing nose and imitating grinding of camera with other hand Suddenly she falls out of the posture and swiftly goes to him, to embrace him, to kiss with love Finally)

SID You look tired, Florrie

FLOR Naw, I just need a shave (She laughs tremulously)

SID You worried about your mother?

FLOR No

SID What's on your mind?

FLOR The French and Indian War

SID What's on your mind?

FLOR I got us on my mind, Sid
Night and day, Sid!

SID I smacked a beer truck today
Did I get hell! I was driving along
thinking of US, too You don't have
to say it—I know what's on your
mind I'm rat poison around here

FLOR Not to me .

SID I know to who and I know
why I don't blame them We're en-
gaged now for three years

FLOR That's a long time . . .

SID My brother Sam joined the navy
this morning—get a break that way
They'll send him down to Cuba with
the hootchy-kootchy gurls He don't

know from nothing, that dumb bas-
ketball player!

FLOR Don't you do that

SID Don't you worry, I'm not the
kind who runs away But I'm so tired
of being a dog, Baby, I could choke
I don't even have to ask what's going
on in your mind I know from the
word go, 'cause I'm thinking the
same things, too

FLOR It's yes or no—nothing in be-
tween

SID The answer is no—a big electric
sign looking down on Broadway!

FLOR We wanted to have kids

SID But that sort of life ain't for
the dogs which is us Christ, Baby!
I get like thunder in my chest when
we're together If we went off to-
gether I could maybe look the world
straight in the face, spit in its eye like
a man should do God damn it, it's
trying to be a man on the earth Two
in life together

FLOR But something wants us to be
lonely like that—crawling alone in
the dark Or they want us trapped

SID Sure, the big-shot money men
want us like that

FLOR Highly insulting us—

SID Keeping us in the dark about
what is wrong with us in the money
sense They got the power and mean
to be damn sure they keep it They
know if they give in just an inch, all
the dogs like us will be down on them
together—an ocean knocking them
to hell and back and each singing
cuckoo with stars coming from their

nose and ears. I'm not raving, Florrie—

wrong way, that dumb basketball player!

FLOR I know you're not, I know.

FLOR I got a lump in my throat, Honey

SID I don't have the words to tell you what I feel I never finished school

SID You and me—we never even had a room to sit in somewhere

FLOR I know. . . .

FLOR The park was nice .

SID But it's relative, like the professors say We worked like hell to send him to college—my kid brother Sam, I mean—and look what he done—joined the navy! The damn fool don't see the cards is stacked for all of us The money man dealing himself a hot royal flush Then giving you and me a phony hand like a pair of tens or something Then keep on losing the pots 'cause the cards is stacked against you Then he says, what's the matter you can't win—no stuff on the ball, he says to you And kids like my brother believe it 'cause they don't know better For all their education, they don't know from nothing But wait a minute! Don't he come around and say to you—this millionaire with a jazz band—listen Sam or Sid or what's-your-name, you're no good, but here's a chance The whole world'll know who you are Yes sir, he says, get up on that ship and fight those bastards who's making the world a lousy place to live in The Japs, the Turks, the Greeks Take this gun—kill the slobs like a real hero, he says, a real American Be a hero! And the guy you're poking at? A real louse, just like you, 'cause they don't let him catch more than a pair of tens, too On that foreign soil he's a guy like me and Sam, a guy who wants his baby like you and hot sun on his face! They'll teach Sam to point the guns the

SID In Winter? The hallways I'm glad we never got together This way we don't know what we missed.

FLOR (*in a burst*) Sid, I'll go with you—we'll get a room somewhere

SID Naw they're right If we can't climb higher than this together—we better stay apart

FLOR I swear to God I wouldn't care

SID You would, you would—in a year, two years, you'd curse the day I seen it happen

FLOR Oh, Sid .

SID Sure, I know We got the blues, Babe—the 1935 blues I'm talkin' this way 'cause I love you If I didn't, I wouldn't care

FLOR We'll work together, we'll—

SID How about the backwash? Your family needs your nine bucks My family—

FLOR I don't care for them!

SID You're making it up, Florrie Little Florrie Canary in a cage

FLOR Don't make fun of me.

SID I'm not, Baby

FLOR Yes, you're laughing at me

SID I'm not
(They stand looking at each other, unable to speak Finally, he turns to a small portable phonograph and plays a cheap, sad, dance tune He makes a motion with his hand, she comes to him They begin to dance slowly They hold each other tightly, almost as though they would merge into each other The music stops, but the scratching record continues to the end of the scene They stop dancing He finally unlooses her clutch and seats her on the couch, where she sits, tense and expectant)

SID Hello, Babe

FLOR Hello (For a brief time they stand as though in a dream)

SID (finally) Good-by, Babe (He waits for an answer, but she is silent They look at each other)

SID Did you ever see my Pat Rooney imitation? (He whistles Rosy O'Grady and soft shoes to it Stops He asks)

SID Don't you like it?

FLOR (finally) No (Buries her face in her hands)
(Suddenly he falls on his knees and buries his face in her lap)

BLACKOUT

IV LABOR SPY EPISODE

FATT You don't know how we work for you Shooting off your mouth won't help Hell, don't you guys ever look at the records like me? Look in your own industry See what happened when the hacks walked out in Philly three months ago! Where's Philly? A thousand miles away? An hour's ride on the train

VOICE Two hours!

FATT Two hours what the hell's the difference Let's hear from someone who's got the practical experience to back him up Fellers, there's a man here who's seen the whole parade in Philly, walked out with his

pals, got knocked down like the rest—and blacklisted after they went back That's why he's here He's got a mighty interestin' word to say (Announces) TOM CLAYTON! (As CLAYTON starts up from the audience, FATT gives him a hand which is sparsely followed in the audience CLAYTON comes forward) Fellers, this is a man with practical strike experience—Tom Clayton from little ole Philly

CLAYTON (a thin, modest individual) Fellers, I don't mind your booing If I thought it would help us hacks get better living conditions, I'd let you walk all over me, cut me

up to little pieces I'm one of you myself But what I wanna say is that Harry Fatt's right I only been working here in the big town five weeks, but I know conditions just like the rest of you You know how it is—don't take long to feel the sore spots, no matter where you park

CLEAR VOICE (*from audience*) Sit down!

CLAYTON But Fatt's right Our officers is right The time ain't ripe Like a fruit don't fall off the tree until it's ripe

CLEAR VOICE. Sit down, you fruit!

FATT (*on his feet*) Take care of him, boys

VOICE (*in audience, struggling*) No one takes care of me (*Struggle in house and finally the owner of the voice runs up on stage, says to speaker*)

SAME VOICE Where the hell did you pick up that name? Clayton! This rat's name is Clancy, from the old Clancys, way back! Fruit! I almost wet myself listening to that one!

FATT (*gunmen with him*) This ain't a barn! What the hell do you think you're doing here!

SAME VOICE Exposing a rat!

FATT You can't get away with this Throw him the hell outa here

VOICE (*preparing to stand his ground*) Try it yourself When this bozo throws that slop around You know who he is? That's a company spy

FATT Who the hell are you to make—

VOICE I paid dues in this union for four years, that's who's me! I gotta right and this pussy-footed rat ain't coming in here with ideals like that You know his record Lemme say it out—

FATT You'll prove all this or I'll bust you in every hack outfit in town!

VOICE I gotta right I gotta right Looka him, he don't say boo!

CLAYTON You're a liar and I never seen you before in my life!

VOICE Boys, he spent two years in the coal fields breaking up any organization he touched Fifty guys he put in jail He's ranged up and down the east coast—shipping, textiles, steel—he's been in everything you can name Right now—

CLAYTON That's a lie!

VOICE Right now he's working for that Bergman outfit on Columbus Circle who furnishes rats for any outfit in the country before, during, and after strikes (*The man who is the hero of the next episode goes down to his side with other committee men*)

CLAYTON He's trying to break up the meeting, fellers!

VOICE We won't search you for credentials

CLAYTON I got nothing to hide Your own secretary knows I'm straight

VOICE *Six* Boys, you know who this sonovabitch is?

CLAYTON I never seen you before in my life!'

VOICE Boys, I slept with him in the same bed sixteen years HE'S MY OWN LOUSY BROTHER!'

FATT *(after pause)* Is this true?
(No answer from CLAYTON)

VOICE *(to CLAYTON)*. Scram, before I break your neck!
(CLAYTON *scrams down center aisle*)

VOICE *(watching him)* Remember his map—he can't change that—Clancy! *(Standing in his place)* Too bad you didn't know about this, Fatt! *(After a pause)* The Clancy family tree is bearing nuts!
(*Standing isolated clear on the stage is the hero of the next episode*)

BLACKOUT

V THE YOUNG ACTOR

A New York theatrical producer's office Present are a stenographer and a young actor She is busy typing, he, waiting with card in hand

STEN He's taking a hot bath
says you should wait

PHILIPS *(the actor)* A bath did you say? Where?

STEN See that door? Right through there—leads to his apartment

PHIL Through there?

STEN Mister, he's laying there in a hot perfumed bath Don't say I said it

PHIL You don't say!

STEN An oriental den he's got Can you just see this big Irishman burning Chinese punk in the bedroom? And a big old rose canopy over his casting couch

PHIL What's that—casting couch?

STEN What's that? You from the sticks?

PHIL I beg your pardon?

STEN *(rolls up her sleeves, makes elaborate and dumb signs)* No from side walkies of New Yorkie savvy?

PHIL Oh, you're right Two years of dramatic stock out of town One in Chicago

STEN Don't tell him, Baby Face He wouldn't know a good actor if he fell over him in the dark Say you had two years with the Group, two with the Guild

PHIL I'd like to get with the Guild They say—

STEN He won't know the difference Don't say I said it!

PHIL. I really did play with Watson Findlay in "Early Birds"

STEN (*withering him*) Don't tell him!

PHIL He's a big producer, Mr Grady I wish I had his money Don't you?

STEN Say, I got a clean heart, Mister I love my fellow man! (*About to exit with typed letters*) Stick around—Mr Philips You might be the type If you were a woman—

PHIL Please Just a minute please I need the job

STEN Look at him!

PHIL I mean I don't know what buttons to push, and you do What my father used to say—we had a gas station in Cleveland before the crash—"Know what buttons to push," Dad used to say, "and you'll go far"

STEN You can't push me, Mister! I don't ring right these last few years!

PHIL We don't know where the next meal's coming from We—

STEN Maybe I'll lend you a dollar?

PHIL Thanks very much it won't help

STEN One of the old families of Virginia? Proud?

PHIL Oh, not that You see, I have a wife We'll have our first baby next month, so a dollar isn't much help.

STEN Roped in?

PHIL I love my wife!

STEN Okay, you love her! Excuse me! You married her Can't support her No not blaming you But you're fools, all you actors Old and young! Watch you parade in and out all day You still got apples in your cheeks and pins for buttons But in six months you'll be like them—putting on an act phony strutting "pushers"—that's French for dead codfish! It's not their fault Here you get like that or go under What kind of job is this for an adult man?

PHIL When you have to make a living—

STEN I know, but—

PHIL Nothing else to do If I could get something else—

STEN You'd take it!

PHIL Anything!

STEN Telling me! With two brothers in my hair! (*Mr Grady now enters, played by FATT*) Mr. Brown sent this young man over

GRADY Call the hospital see how Boris is (*She assents and exits*)

PHIL Good morning, Mr Grady.

GRADY. The morning is lousy!

PHIL Mr Brown sent me (*Hands over card*)

GRADY I heard that once already

PHIL Excuse me

GRADY What experience?

PHIL Oh, yes. . . .

GRADY Where?

PHIL Two years in stock, sir A year with the Goodman Theatre in Chicago

GRADY That all?

PHIL (*abashed*) Why no . . . with the Theatre Guild . . . I was there .

GRADY Never saw you in a Guild show!

PHIL On the road, I mean understudying Mr Lunt

GRADY What part? (*Philips can not answer*) You're a lousy liar, son.

PHIL I did . . .

GRADY You don't look like what I want Can't understand that Brown Need a big man to play a soldier Not a lousy soldier left on Broadway! All in pictures, and we get the nances! (*Turns to work on desk*)

PHIL (*immediately playing the soldier*) I was in the ROTC in college Reserve Officers' Training Corps. We trained twice a week

GRADY. Won't help.

PHIL With real rifles (*Waits*) Mr Grady, I weigh a hundred and fifty-five!

GRADY. How many years back? Been eating regular since you left college?

PHIL (*very earnestly*) Mr Grady, I could act this soldier part. I could build it up and act it. Make it up—

GRADY Think I run a lousy acting school around here?

PHIL Honest to God I could! I need the job—that's why I could do it! I'm strong I know my business! YOU'll get an A-1 performance Because I need this job! My wife's having a baby in a few weeks We need the money Give me a chance!

GRADY What do I care if you can act it? I'm sorry about your baby Use your head, son Tank town stock is different Here we got investments to be protected When I sink fifteen thousand in a show I don't take chances on some youngster We cast to type!

PHIL I'm an artist! I can—

GRADY That's your headache Nobody interested in artists here Get a big bunch for a nickel on any corner Two flops in a row on this lousy street nobody loves you—only God, and He don't count We protect investments we cast to type Your face and height we want, not your soul, son And Jesus Christ himself couldn't play a soldier in this show with all his talent (*Crosses himself in quick repentance for this remark*)

PHIL Anything . . . a bit, a walk-on?

GRADY Sorry small cast (*Looking at papers on his desk*) You try Russia, son I hear it's hot stuff over there

PHIL Stage manager? Assistant?

GRADY All filled, sonny (*Stands up, crumples several papers from the desk*) Better luck next time

PHIL Thanks. . . .

GRADY Drop in from time to time
(Crosses and about to exit) You
never know when something— (The
STENOGRAPHER enters with papers to
put on desk) What did the hospital
say?

STEN He's much better, Mr Grady

GRADY Resting easy?

STEN Dr Martel said Boris is doing
even better than he expected

GRADY A damn lousy operation!

STEN Yes .

GRADY (belching) Tell the nigger
boy to send up a bromo seltzer

STEN Yes, Mr Grady (He exits)
Boris wanted lady friends

PHIL What?

STEN So they operated . poor
dog!

PHIL A dog?

STEN His Russian Wolfhound!
They do the same to you, but you
don't know it! (Suddenly) Want ad-
vice? In the next office, don't let them
see you down in the mouth They
don't like it—makes them shiver

PHIL You treat me like a human be-
ing Thanks .

STEN You're human!

PHIL I used to think so

STEN He wants a bromo for his hang-
over (Goes to door) Want that dol-
lar?

PHIL It won't help much

STEN One dollar buys ten loaves of
bread, Mister Or one dollar buys
nine loaves of bread and one copy of
The Communist Manifesto Learn
while you eat Read while you
run . .

PHIL Manifesto? What's that?
(Takes dollar) What is that, what
you said . Manifesto?

STEN Stop off on your way out—I'll
give you a copy From Genesis to
Revelation, Comrade Philips! "And I
saw a new earth and a new heaven,
for the first earth and the first heaven
were passed away, and there was no
more sea "

PHIL I don't understand that . . .

STEN I'm saying the meek shall not
inherit the earth!

PHIL No?

STEN The MILITANT! Come out
in the light, Comrade

BLACKOUT

VI INTERNE EPISODE

DR BARNES, *an elderly distinguished man, is speaking on the telephone He wears a white coat*

DR BARNES No, I gave you my opinion twice You outvoted me You did this to Dr Benjamin yourself That is why you can tell him yourself (*Hangs up phone, angrily As he is about to pour himself a drink from a bottle on the table, a knock is heard*)

BARNES Who is it?

BENJAMIN (*without*) Can I see you a minute, please?

BARNES (*hiding the bottle*) Come in, Dr Benjamin, come in

BENJ It's important—excuse me—they've got Leeds up there in my place—He's operating on Mrs Lewis—the hysterectomy—it's my job I washed up, prepared they told me at the last minute I don't mind being replaced, Doctor, but Leeds is a damn fool! He shouldn't be permitted—

BARNES (*dryly*) Leeds is the nephew of Senator Leeds

BENJ He's incompetent as hell

BARNES (*obviously changing subject, picks up lab jar*) They're doing splendid work in brain surgery these days This is a very fine specimen . . .

BENJ I'm sorry, I thought you might be interested

BARNES (*still examining jar*) Well, I am, young man, I am! Only remember it's a charity case!

BENJ Of course They wouldn't allow it for a second, otherwise

BARNES Her life is in danger?

BENJ Of course! You know how serious the case is!

BARNES Turn your gimlet eye elsewhere, Doctor Jiggling around like a cricket on a hot grill won't help Doctors don't run these hospitals He's the Senator's nephew and there he stays

BENJ It's too bad

BARNES I'm not calling you down either (*Plopping down jar suddenly*) God damn it, do you think it's my fault?

BENJ (*about to leave*) I know . . . I'm sorry

BARNES Just a minute Sit down,

BENJ Sorry, I can't sit

BARNES Stand then!

BENJ (sits) Understand, Dr. Barnes, I don't mind being replaced at the last minute this way, but well, this flagrant bit of class distinction—because she's poor—

BARNES Be careful of words like that —“class distinction” Don't belong here Lots of energy, you brilliant young men, but idiots Discretion! Ever hear that word?

BENJ Too radical?

BARNES Precisely And some day like in Germany, it might cost you your head

BENJ Not to mention my job

BARNES So they told you?

BENJ Told me what?

BARNES They're closing Ward C next month I don't have to tell you the hospital isn't self-supporting Until last year that board of trustees met deficits You can guess the rest At a board meeting Tuesday, our fine feathered friends discovered they couldn't meet the last quarter's deficit—a neat little sum well over \$100,000 If the hospital is to continue at all, its damn—

BENJ Necessary to close another charity ward?

BARNES So they say . . . (A wait)

BENJ But that's not all?

BARNES (ashamed) Have to cut down on staff too

BENJ That's too bad Does it touch me?

BARNES. Afraid it does.

BENJ But after all I'm top man here. I don't mean I'm better than others, but I've worked harder

BARNES And shown more promise . . .

BENJ I always supposed they'd cut from the bottom first

BARNES Usually

BENJ But in this case?

BARNES Complications.

BENJ For instance?

BARNES (hesitant) I like you, Benjamin It's one ripping shame

BENJ I'm no sensitive plant—what's the answer?

BARNES An old disease, malignant, tumescent We need an antitoxin for it

BENJ I see

BARNES What?

BENJ I met that disease before—at Harvard first

BARNES You have seniority here, Benjamin

BENJ But I'm a Jew! (BARNES nods his head in agreement BENJ stands there a moment and blows his nose)

BARNES (blows his nose) Microbe!

BENJ Pressure from above?

BARNES Don't think Kennedy and I didn't fight for you!

BENJ Such discrimination, with all those wealthy brother Jews on the board?

BARNES I've remarked before—doesn't seem to be much difference between wealthy Jews and rich Gentiles Cut from the same piecel

BENJ For myself I don't feel sorry My parents gave up an awful lot to get me this far They ran a little dry-goods shop in the Bronx until their pitiful savings went in the crash last year Poppa's peddling neckties Saul Ezra Benjamin—a man who's read Spinoza all his life

BARNES Doctors don't run medicine in this country The men who know their jobs don't run anything here, except the motormen on trolley cars I've seen medicine change—plenty—*anesthesia, sterilization—but not because of rich men—in spite of them!* In a rich man's country your true self's buried deep Microbes! Less Vermin! See this ankle, this delicate sensitive hand? Four hundred years to breed that Out of a revolutionary background! Spirit of '76! Ancestors froze at Valley Forge! What's it all mean? Slops! The honest workers were sold out then, in '76 The Constitution's for rich men then and now Slops! *(The phone rings)*

BARNES *(angrily)* Dr Barnes *(Listens a moment, looks at BENJAMIN)* I see *(Hangs up, turns slowly to the younger Doctor)* They lost your patient

(BENJ stands solid with the shock of this news but finally hurls his operation gloves to the floor)

BARNES That's right that's right Young, hot, go and do it! I'm very ancient, fossil, but life's ahead

of you, Dr Benjamin, and when you fire the first shot say, "This one's for old Doc Barnes!" Too much dignity—bullets Don't shoot vermin! Step on them! If I didn't have an invalid daughter—*(Goes back to his seat, blows his nose in silence)* I have said my piece, Benjamin

BENJ Lots of things I wasn't certain of Many things these radicals say . you don't believe theories until they happen to you

BARNES You lost a lot today, but you won a great point

BENJ Yes, to know I'm right? To really begin believing in something? Not to say, "What a world!" but to say, "Change the world!" I wanted to go to Russia Last week I was thinking about it—the wonderful opportunity to do good work in their socialized medicine—

BARNES Beautiful, beautiful!

BENJ To be able to work—

BARNES Why don't you go? I might be able—

BENJ Nothing's nearer what I'd like to do!

BARNES Do it!

BENJ No! Our work's here—America! I'm scared What future's ahead, I don't know Get some job to keep alive—maybe drive a cab—and study and work and learn my place—

BARNES And step down hard!

BENJ Fight! Maybe get killed, but God damn! We'll go ahead! *(BENJAMIN stands with clenched fist raised high)*

AGATE. LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, and don't let anyone tell you we ain't got some ladies in this sea of upturned faces! Only they're wearin' pants Well, maybe I don't know a thing, maybe I fell outa the cradle when I was a kid and ain't been right since—you can't tell!

VOICE Sit down, cockeye!

AGATE Who's paying you for those remarks, Buddy?—Moscow Gold? Maybe I got a *glass eye*, but it come from working in a factory at the age of eleven They hooked it out because they didn't have a shield on the works But I wear it like a medal 'cause it tells the world where I belong—deep down in the working class! We had delegates in the union there—all kinds of secretaries and treasurers walkin' delegates, but not with blisters on their feet! Oh, no! On their fat little ass from sitting on cushions and raking in mazzuma (*SECRETARY and GUNMAN remonstrate in words and actions here*) Sit down, boys I'm just sayin' that about unions in general I know it ain't true here! Why no, our officers is all aces Why, I seen our own secretary Fatt walk outa his way not to step on a cockroach No, boys, don't think—

FATT (*breaking in*) You're out of order!

AGATE (*to audience*) Am I outa order?

ALL No, no Speak Go on, etc

AGATE Yes, our officers is all aces But I'm a member here—and no ex-

penence in Philly either! Today I couldn't wear my union button The damndest thing happened When I take the old coat off the wall, I see she's smoking I'm a sonovagun if the old union button isn't on fire! Yep, the old celluloid was makin' the most god-awful stink the landlady come up and give me hell! You know what happened?—that old union button just blushed itself to death! Ashamed! Can you beat it?

FATT Sit down, Keller! Nobody's interested!

AGATE Yes they are!

GUNMAN Sit down like he tells you!

AGATE (*continuing to audience*) And when I finish—
(*His speech is broken by FATT and GUNMAN who physically handle him He breaks away and gets to other side of stage The two are about to make for him when some of the committeemen come forward and get in between the struggling parties AGATE's shirt has been torn*)

AGATE (*to audience*) What's the answer, boys? The answer is, if we're reds because we wanna strike, then we take over their salute too! Know how they do it? (*Makes Communist salute*) What is it? An uppercut! The good old uppercut to the chin! Hell, some of us boys ain't even got a shirt to our back What's the boss class tryin' to do—make a nudist colony outa us?
(*The audience laughs and suddenly AGATE comes to the middle of the stage so that the other cabmen back him up in a strong clump*)

AGATE Don't laugh! Nothing's funny! This is your life and mine! It's skull and bones every incha the road! Christ, we're dyin' by inches! For what? For the debutant-ees to have their sweet comin' out parties in the Ritz! Poppa's got a daughter she's gotta get her picture in the papers Christ, they make 'em with our blood Joe said it Slow death or fight It's war! *(Throughout this whole speech AGATE is backed up by the other six workers, so that from their activity it is plain that the whole group of them are saying these things Several of them may take alternate lines out of this long last speech.)* You Edna, God love your mouth! Sid and Florne, the other boys, old Doc Barnes—fight with us for right! It's war! Working class, unite and fight! Tear down the slaughterhouse of our old lives! Let freedom really ring These slick sloba stand here telling us about bogeymen That's a new one for the kids—the reds is bogeymen! But the man who got me food in 1932, he called me Comrade! The one who picked me up where I bled—he called me Comrade too! What are we waiting for Don't wait for Lefty! He might never come Every minute—*(This is broken into by a man who has dashed up the center aisle from the back of the house He runs up on stage, says)*

MAN Boys, they just found Lefty!

OTHERS. What? What? What?

SOME Shhh Shhh .

MAN They found Lefty. .

AGATE Where?

MAN Behind the car barns with a bullet in his head!

AGATE *(crying)* Hear it, boys, hear it? Hell, listen to me! Coast to coast! HELLO AMERICA! HELLO WE'RE STORMBIRDS OF THE WORKING CLASS WORKERS OF THE WORLD OUR BONES AND BLOOD! And when we die they'll know what we did to make a new world! Christ, cut us up to little pieces We'll die for what is right! put fruit trees where our ashes are! *(To audience)* Well, what's the answer?

ALL STRIKE!

AGATE LOUDER!

ALL STRIKE!

AGATE and OTHERS *(on stage)* AGAIN!

ALL STRIKE, STRIKE, STRIKE!!

CURTAIN

NOTES FOR PRODUCTION

The background of the episodes, a strike meeting, is not an excuse Each of the committeemen shows in his episode the crucial moment of his life which brought him to this very platform The dramatic structure on which

the play has been built is simple but highly effective. The form used is the old blackface minstrel form of chorus, end men, specialty men and interlocutor.

In FATT's scenes before the "Spy Exposé," mention should again be made of LEFTY's tardiness. Sitting next to FATT in the center of the circle is a little henchman who sits with his back to the audience. On the other side of FATT is LEFTY's empty chair. This is so indicated by FATT when he himself asks "Yeah, where's your chairman?"

FATT, of course, represents the capitalist system throughout the play. The audience should constantly be kept aware of him, the ugly menace which hangs over the lives of all the people who act out their own dramas. Perhaps he puffs smoke into the spotted playing space, perhaps during the action of a playlet he might insolently walk in and around the unseeing players. It is possible that some highly gratifying results can be achieved by the imaginative use of this character.

The strike committee on the platform during the acting out of the playlets should be used as chorus. Emotional, political, musical, they have in them possibilities of various comments on the scenes. This has been indicated once in the script in the place where JOE's wife is about to leave him. In the climaxes of each scene, slogans might very effectively be used—a voice coming out of the dark. Such a voice might announce at the appropriate moments in the "Young Interne's" scene that the USSR is the only country in the world where anti-Semitism is a crime against the State.

Do not hesitate to use music wherever possible. It is very valuable in emotionally stirring an audience.

Dead End

BY SIDNEY KINGSLEY

"The contrast of affluence and wretchedness is
like dead and living bodies chained together"

THOMAS PAINE

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Dead End was first produced at the Belasco Theatre, New York City, by Norman Bel Geddes on October 28, 1935, and closed on June 12, 1937
 Following is the original cast

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| GIMPTY | Theodore Newton |
| T B | Gabriel Dell |
| TOMMY | Billy Hallop |
| DIPPY | Huntz Hall |
| ANGEL | Bobby Jordon |
| SPIT | Charles R Duncan |
| DOORMAN | George Cotton |
| OLD LADY | Marie R Burke |
| OLD GENTLEMAN | George N Price |
| 1ST CHAUFFEUR | Charles Benjamin |
| "BABY-FACE" MARTIN | Joseph Downing |
| HUNK | Martin Gabel |
| PHILIP GRISWALD | Charles Bellin |
| GOVERNESS | Sidonie Espero |
| MILTY | Bernard Punsly |
| DRINA | Elsbeth Eric |
| MR GRISWALD | Carroll Ashburn |
| MR JONES | Louis Woods |
| KAY | Margaret Mullen |
| JACK HILTON | Cyril Gordon Weld |
| LADY WITH DOG | Margaret Linden |
| THREE SMALL BOYS | { Billy Winston, Joseph Taib { Sidney Lumet |
| 2ND CHAUFFEUR | Richard Clark |
| SECOND AVENUE BOYS | David Gorcey, Leo Gorcey |
| MRS MARTIN | Marjone Main |
| PATROLMAN MULLIGAN | Robert J Mulligan |
| FRANCEY | Sheila Trent |

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| G MEN | { Francis de Sales, Dan Duryea Edward P Goodnow |
| POLICEMEN | { Francis G Cleveland William Toubin |
| PLAINCLOTHESMAN | George Steele |
| INTERNE | Philip Bourneuf |
| MEDICAL EXAMINER | Lewis L Russel |
| SAILOR | Bernard Zanville |

Directed by Sidney Kingsley

DEAD END

ACT ONE

Dead end of a New York street, ending in a wharf over the East River To the left are a high terrace and a white iron gate leading to the back of the exclusive East River Terrace Apartments Hugging the terrace and filing up the street are a series of squalid tenement houses

Beyond the wharf is the East River, covered by a swirling scum an inch thick A brown river, mucky with floating refuse and offal A hundred sewers vomit their guts into it Up-town of the wharf as we float down Hell Gate, the River voices its defiant protest in fierce whirlpools and stumbling rapids, groaning Farther down, we pass under the arch of the Queensboro Bridge, spired, delicate, weblike in superstructure, powerful and brutal in the stone and steel which it plants like uncouth giant feet on the earth In its hop, skip, and jump over the River it has planted one such foot on the Island called Welfare, once the home of hospital, insane asylum, and prison, now being dismantled, an eyesore to the fastidious who have recently become its neighbors And here on the shore, along the Fifties, is a strange sight Set plumb down in the midst of slums, antique warehouses, discarded breweries, slaughterhouses, electrical works, gas tanks, loading cranes, coal-chutes, the very wealthy have begun to establish their city residence in huge, new, palatial apartments

The East River Terrace is one of these Looking up this street from the vantage of the River, we see only a small portion of the back terrace and a gate, but they are enough to suggest the towering magnificence of the whole structure The wall is of rich, heavy masonry, guarded at the top by a row of pikes Beyond the pikes, shutting off the view of the squalid street below, is a thick edging of lush green shrubbery And beyond that, a glimpse of the tops of gaily colored sun umbrellas Occasionally the clink of glasses and laughter filter through the shrubs The exposed sidewall of the tenement is whitewashed and ornamented with an elaborate, ivy-covered trellis to hide its ugliness The gate posts are crowned with brass ship lanterns, one red, one green Through the gateway is a catwalk which leads to a floating dock, where the inhabitants of this apartment moor their boats and yachts

Contrasting sharply with all this richness is the diseased street below, filthy, strewn with torn newspapers and garbage from the tenements The tenement houses are close, dark and crumbling They crowd each other Where there are curtains in the windows, they are streaked and faded, where there are none, we see through to hideous, water-stained, peeling wallpaper, and old broken-down furniture The fire escapes are cluttered with gutted mattresses and quilts, old clothes, bread boxes, milk bottles, a canary cage an occasional potted plant struggling for life

To the right is a huge, red sand hopper standing on stilts of heavy timber several stories tall Up the street, blocking the view, is a caterpillar steam shovel Beyond it, way over to the west, are the sky-scraping parallelepipeds

of Radio City An alley-way between two tenements, tied together by drooping lines of wash, gives us a distant glimpse of the mighty Empire State Building rearing its useless mooring tower a quarter of a mile into the clouds

At the juncture of tenement house and terrace is a police call-box, at the juncture of the street and wharf is a police station bearing the warning, "Dead End"

The boards of the wharf are weatherbeaten and deeply grained, the piles are stained green with algae to where the water licks, and brown above A ladder nailed to the beams dips down into the river The sunlight tossed from the waves dances across the piles to the musical lap of the water Other river sounds counterpoint the orchestration the bells and the whistles, the clink and the chug of passing boats

A gang of boys are swimming in the sewerage at the foot of the wharf, splashing about and enjoying it immensely Some of them wear torn bathing trunks, others are nude Their speech is a rhythmic, shocking jargon that would put a truck-driver to blush

There are a few onlookers A fat, greasy WOMAN leans out of a tenement window She is peeling an orange and throwing the peels into the street A sensitive-faced young MAN, in a patched, frayed shirt, open at the neck, is sitting on one of the piles In his lap is a drawing board Occasionally he will work feverishly, using pencil and triangular ruler, then he will let the pencil droop, and stare out over the river with deep-set eyes, dream-laden, moody

A tubercular-looking BOY about sixteen is up near the hopper, pitching pennies to the sidewalk There is a splash of water, a loud derisive laugh, and up the ladder climbs a BOY, lean, lithe, long-limbed, snub-nosed, his cheeks puffed with water Reaching the top of the ladder, he leans over and squirts out the water A yelp below He laughs again and cries "Gotcha dat time!"

TWO BOYS come running down the street toward the wharf One, a tiny Italian with a great shock of blue-black hair, is dangling a shoe box almost as big as himself, the other, a gawky Polack, head shaven, cretinous, adenoidal, is slapping his thigh with a rolled newspaper as he runs They shout "Hi ya, Tommy?"

TOMMY H'lo, Angel! H'lo, Dippy!
(ANGEL unslings his box, and starts tearing off his clothes A squat boy with a brutish face, snot bubbling from his nostrils, climbs up after TOMMY As he reaches the top and sees the others, he shouts in a mocking sing-song, "Dopey Dippy, dopey Dippy, dopey Dippy!")

DIPPY Shat ap, will ya, Spit!

SPIT (spitting through his teeth at DIPPY, who is stripping his jersey over his head) Right inna belly-

button! (Laughs and climbs onto the wharf to sprawl next to TOMMY DIPPY mumbles and wipes out his navel with his finger)

TOMMY Lay off 'im, why doncha?

SPIT I'll knock 'im innis eye!

TOMMY Wassamattuh? Yuh a wise guy er a boy scout? C'mon in, Dippy!

ANGEL Howza wawda, Tommy?

TOMMY Boy! Duh nuts!

SPIT Geeze, great!

ANGEL Cold?

TOMMY Nah Swell Jus' right
(Wiping off some of the river filth
that has clung to him) Boy, deah's a
lot a junk inna wawda tuhday!

DIPPY (pointing to some dirt on
SPIT's back) Wat's at? (He touches
SPIT, smells his finger and makes a
wry face) Pee-ew, whadda stunk!
(SPIT plucks off a huge gob of filth
and throws it at DIPPY DIPPY
whines) What yuh wanna do dat
fuh?

SPIT Aw, I'll mobilize yuh!

TOMMY Leave 'im alone! (To DIPPY)
Whyn't yuh keep yuh trap shut,
huh?

DIPPY He trew dat crap on me! I
wuz

TOMMY OK OK OK (Pointing
at some imaginary object near the
sand hopper) Hey, felluhs, look!
(All look off TOMMY sticks his fore-
finger next to SPIT's averted nose)
Hey, Spit! (SPIT turns his head and
bumps his nose on TOMMY's finger
The boys laugh) Nex' time leave 'im
alone, sec?
(The cadaverous-looking lad picks
up his pennies, and comes down to
the others, boasting, "Boy, I got a
crack all a time!")

TOMMY (rising) Yeah? Aw right,
T B, I'll pitch yuh

T B OK C'mon

TOMMY Lemme a couple.

T B Yuh an' got 'ny?

TOMMY Come on! I'll pay yuh back
(TOMMY and T B go up to the hop-
per and pitch pennies to the side
walk)

SPIT (turning to DIPPY, makes a
swipe at him DIPPY backs away)
Two fuh flinchin' two fuh
flinchin'!

DIPPY I di' not

SPIT Yuh did so

DIPPY I di' not

ANGEL Whyn't cha choose? Choose
'im Choose fer it!

SPIT (scrambling to his feet) OK
Odds!

ANGEL Go on!

DIPPY Evens! (SPIT and DIPPY
match fingers) Once fuh me See?
Cheatin' shows!

SPIT Come on! Once fuh me Twice
fuh me An' tree fuh me Cheatin'
shows? Yeah Boy, ahl knock yuh
fer a loop!

ANGEL Go on, Dippy, yuh lost Yuh
git yer lumps

DIPPY (whining) Hey, Tommy

SPIT (grabbing DIPPY's rolled news
paper) Come on! (He bangs DIPPY
twice on the head)

DIPPY Ow! Ow! Ow! Ah,
yuh louse Yuh didn't have tuh hit
me so hahd. Wid all his might he hit
me Wid all his might, duh son uva
bitch!

TOMMY (*still absorbed in pitching pennies with T B*) Whyn't yuh pick on a kid who kin fight back?

SPIT Aw-ww!

TOMMY Ah!

(*The DOORMAN, a giant in powder-blue uniform with gilt buttons and braid, opens the gate of the apartment house, crosses to the end of the sidewalk and blows a whistle, then signals to someone up the street to come down. He turns to speak to an aristocratic OLD GENTLEMAN and OLD LADY who appear in the gateway of the East River Terraces*)

DOORMAN I'm so sorry, ma'am, but it'll only be for a day or two

OLD LADY That's quite all right

OLD GENTLEMAN (*arthritic, grumpy, walking slowly and with effort*) It isn't at all. There's no reason why we should have to walk half a block to the car

(*A COLORED MAN in chauffeur's uniform comes down the sidewalk*)

DOORMAN I'm so sorry, sir

OLD LADY That's quite all right (*She pauses a moment, surveying the boys*) Look at this!

OLD GENTLEMAN Humph! I've seen it from the balcony

ANGEL Hey, look, guys! Dey usin' a back daw

TOMMY I wonduh why

DIPPY (*familiarly, to the young man who is sketching*) Duh yuh know, 'Gimpy? Hey, Gimpy?

GIMPTY What?

DIPPY Duh yuh know why?

GIMPTY Why what?

DIPPY Why dey usin' a back daw

GIMPTY Are they?

DIPPY Yeah

GIMPTY No no, I don't
(*The COLORED CHAUFFEUR salutes the OLD MAN and offers him an arm to lean on*)

CHAUFFEUR Good afternoon, sir I'm sorry I couldn't drive the car around the

OLD LADY That's all right, Jordan Look at these youngsters! Aren't they sweet?

OLD GENTLEMAN Sweet? Yes from a distance!

(*They walk up the street, out of sight. A passing tug blasts the air with its foghorn. TOMMY, having won at penny-pitching, puts the pennies in the pocket of his trousers, which are hanging on the hopper. T B disconsolate, goes to ANGEL*)

T B Dat cleans me I dunno I kin always git a crack when I'm playin' by myself (*He watches ANGEL, who is fussing with a scrap of newspaper and some strange, brown substance*) Watcha got deah?

ANGEL It's a dned up hawse-ball

T B Watcha doin'?

ANGEL I'm gonna make some cigarettes. Some guy tole me—yuh kin make cigarettes outta dem

T B Yeah?

ANGEL Yeah I'm gonna try it

T B I never hoid a dat

ANGEL It's good Some guy tole me

TOMMY Aw, yuh crazy

ANGEL Naw it's good

T B Deah wuz a guy at rifawm school once used tuh smoke marywanna Yuh know what dat is? Dope It's like dope It's dope It gives yuh dreams

ANGEL Didja try it?

T B Nah I can't smoke on accoun' a my T B It gits me I cough like any'ting

ANGEL (*rises and crosses to GIMPTY*) Hey, Gimpty, got a match?

T B (*murmurs*) My pratt and your face Dat's a good match! (*Laughs to himself*)

GIMPTY What fot?

DIPPY He's makin' cigarettes outta hawse-balls

GIMPTY Out of what?

ANGEL Hawse-balls

GIMPTY Throw it away, you crazy fool You want to get sick?

ANGEL I kin smoke Whadda yuh tink I yam?

GIMPTY Listen I read about a guy once who smoked that stuff You know what happened to him

ANGEL What?

GIMPTY Great, big things grew right out of his head

ANGEL (*turning away from GIMPTY, with disgust*) Aw—w—w, go wan

GIMPTY Listen if I give you a good one, will you throw that away?

ANGEL (*turning back eagerly*) Sure!

GIMPTY (*appropriates ANGEL's horrible cigarette and throws it into the water, then takes a sack of tobacco from his pocket, adeptly rolls a cigarette and holds it out to ANGEL*) Here! Stick out your tongue (*ANGEL licks the paper GIMPTY completes rolling the cigarette and gives it to him*) There you are! Now don't try that again You'll get sick as a dog Remember I'm tellin' you

ANGEL (*proudly exhibiting his cigarette*) Boy! Hey, felluhs, look! Gimpty gimme a butt (*To T B*) Gimme a light, T B (*T B fishes some matches from his pocket and lights ANGEL's cigarette*)

DIPPY (*dashing over to GIMPTY*) Me too, Gimpty! Gimme! Yew know me! Yew know me! (*DIPPY, TOMMY and SPIT descend on GIMPTY, swarming over him like a horde of locusts They hold out their hands and beg plaintively "Give us one! Yew know us, Gimpty"*)

GIMPTY No! No! No more! Beat it! That's all! (*They only plead the louder*) I said that's all Don't you understand English? You want a boot in the behind?

(*TWO MEN come down the street One, tall, young, rather good looking in a vicious way the other, older,*

shorter, squat, a sledge-hammer build. The first has thin nervous lips, narrow agate eyes, bloodshot. A peculiarly glossy face, as if the skin had been stretched taut over the cheekbones which are several sizes too large for the lean jaw underneath. Here is a man given to sudden volcanic violence that come and are gone in a breath. His movements are sharp, jerky, his reflexes exaggerated, those of a high-strung man whose nerves are beginning to snap under some constant strain. He covers it, though, with a cocky swagger. He walks leaning forward, hips thrown back, almost as if out of joint. He wears a gray, turned-down fedora, an expensive suit, sharp style, the coat a bit too tight at the waist, pleated trousers, and gray suede shoes. His squat companion is dressed almost identically, but was not designed to wear such clothes. His trousers hang on his hips, revealing a bulge of shirt-waist between vest and trouser-top, his barrel of a chest is too thick for his jacket, his arms too long for the sleeves. His huge fingers you notice at once! Thick stubs sticking out of the shapeless bags of his hands like the teats of a cow. The TWO MEN come down almost to the edge of the wharf. The tall one lights a cigarette, looks about, smiles, shakes his head, and talks sotto voce to his companion.)

TOMMY (to **GIMPY**) Aw, ta hell wid yuh! Cheap skate!
(The boys walk away, disgusted. **GIMPY** rolls another cigarette, lights it, and returns to his drawing-board.)

SPIT Yeah, ta hell wid 'im!

DIPPY Yeah, ta hell wid 'im!

SPIT (crosses to his clothes, which are hanging from a nail on the hopper)
I dun need hisn. I gotta stack a butts
I picked up. I'm savin'.

TOMMY Give us one

DIPPY Yeah! Give us one!

SPIT Nah. I'm savin' 'em

TOMMY Don' be a miser. (**SPIT** takes out a tobacco tin, opens it, exposing a rare collection of cigarette ends gleaned from the streets. Grudgingly he hands **TOMMY** and **DIPPY** a butt each, then selects a choice one for himself.) Gimme a light, T B. (They all light up and puff away with huge satisfaction.)

ANGEL (suddenly aware of the two strangers) Shine, mistah? (The tall fellow shakes his head and turns away.) A good shine. Come on! (To the other) Yew? (The squat man glares at him and growls, "Yuh cock-eyed? Can't yuh see we got one?")

ANGEL (turns away, muttering) Aw call 'at a shine?

(The **DOORMAN** comes to the gate and holds it open. A **GOVERNESS**, accompanied by a well-dressed, delicate-featured, little boy, comes out of the Terrace Apartments. The **GOVERNESS** talks with a marked French accent. She nods to the **DOORMAN**.)

GOVERNESS Good afternoon

DOORMAN Good afternoon, ma'am

GOVERNESS But where is our chauffeur?

DOORMAN I think he's on the corner with the cab-drivers. Shall I get him?

GOVERNESS Never mind (To the little boy) Wait here Attends moi ici, mon cher!

(The DOORMAN goes in, closing the gate behind him The little boy, surveying the curious scene, answers, a bit distracted, "All right, I'll When he opens his mouth, he shows a shiny, gold orthodontic brace)

GOVERNESS Mais, Philippe! En français!

PHILIP (obediently) Oui, mademoiselle, j'attendrai

GOVERNESS Très bien J'y reviendras de suite dans deux minutes

PHILIP Oui, oui, mademoiselle (She hurries up the sidewalk and out of sight)

TOMMY Wee-wee! He's godda go wee-wee! (All the boys shout with laughter)

DIPPY Do a swan-dive, Tommy At's wad I like

TOMMY OK Hole my butt (He hands his cigarette to DIPPY) Hey, kid! Hey, yew! Hey, wee-wee! (PHILIP looks at him) Yuh wanna see sumpn? A swan-dive Watch! (TOMMY dashes off, under the hopper We hear his "Whe-e-e" and a splash The boys cluck approval)

PHILIP What's so wonderful about that?

ANGEL Aw, yuh fat tub a buttuh, it's more'n yew kin do

PHILIP That shows how much you know

T B I bet a dollar he can't even swim

PHILIP I can too

T B Ah, balonee!

PHILIP Balonee yourself! We've a pool in there and I swim every day with instruction

SPIT Aw, bushwah! (TOMMY appears on the ladder DIPPY hands him his cigarette)

DIPPY He sez dey godda pool in ere

TOMMY How wuzat swan-dive?

DIPPY He sez it wuz lousy

TOMMY (climbing over the parapet and crossing to PHILIP, belligerently) Oh yeah? What wuza mattuh wid it? Kin yew do betta?

PHILIP A trillion times

TOMMY Awright Lessee yuh

PHILIP Where?

TOMMY Heah!

PHILIP Here?

TOMMY Yeah, heah Yew hoid me Yew ain' deaf (Turns to the others) His eahs ovuhlap, dat's it! (They roar with laughter)

PHILIP I wouldn't swim here

T B He's yelluh, dat's what! Dat's what! He's godda yelluh streak up 'is back a mile wide

PHILIP It's dirty here

DIPPY (shocked) Doity!

T B (very indignant) Doity! He sez doity He sez it's doity! I'll sock 'im!

ANGEL Lil fairy!

SPIT Wassamattuh? Yuh sca'd yuh git a hl doit on yuh?

PHILIP Besides, I haven't got my suit

TOMMY Well, go in bareass

T B Yeah, wassamattuh wid bareass?

PHILIP And besides, I'm not allowed to

DIPPY (*sing-song*) Sissy, sissy, sucks his mamma's titty!

PHILIP Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me
(*The boys crowd him back against the gate*)

TOMMY Ah, ahl spit in yuh eye an' drown yuh Hey, what's 'at junk yuh got in yuh mout like a hawse?

PHILIP It's a brace, to make my teeth straight

TOMMY Wha-r-at? I could do dat wit one wallop!
(*The gang roar with laughter*)

PHILIP You try and you'll be ar rested

SPIT Yeah?

TOMMY (*contemptuously*) Look who's gonna arrest us!

PHILIP My uncle's a judge

TOMMY Balonee!

PHILIP Did you ever hear of Judge Griswald?

ANGEL So what? So I know a guy whose brudduh's a detective He'll git us out

T B Yeah? Did yuh evuh hear a Judge Poikins? Well, he's a frien' a mine, see? He sent me to nfawn school once

DOORMAN (*appears, bellowing*) What's the matter? Get away from here, you! (*They scatter, razzing him He turns to PHILIP*) Were they bothering you?

PHILIP No, I don't pay any attention to them
(*The DOORMAN opens the gate and both he and PHILIP go in The boys laugh and mock them DIPPY, pre-occupied with the phenomena of his body, suddenly discovers a lone hair on his chest*)

DIPPY Boy! Gee! Hey, I godda hair!
(*He caresses it, proudly T B comes over, inspects the hair, admires it, then suddenly plucks it out, and runs away laughing and holding up the trophy DIPPY yips, first with pain, then with rage TOMMY finds an old discarded broom in the litter under the hopper He balances it skillfully on the palm of his hand*)

SPIT Gese, I'm hungry!

TOMMY Me too!

ANGEL Boy, I'm so hungry I could eat a live dog

DIPPY (*looks up from his wounded chest*) Boy, I could eat a hot dog

ANGEL Wid sauerkraut!

DIPPY Yeah

ANGEL (*licking his lips and patting his belly*) Yum

SPIT Hey, should we go tuh Schultzie's 'n' see if we kin snitch sumpn?

TOMMY (*balancing the broom*) Nah, Schultzie's wise tuh us

ANGEL We could try some udduh staws

TOMMY (*still balancing the broom*) Nah, dey're all wise tuh us Duh minute we walk in 'ey asks us wadda we want If we had some dough, while one uv us wuz buyin' sumpn de udduh guys could swipe some stuff, see? I got faw cents, but 'at ain' enough (*He drops the broom, and becomes the man of action*) Anybody got any dough heah? Hey, yew, Angel, yuh got some?

ANGEL No, I ain'

TOMMY Come on! Don' hole out!

ANGEL Honest! I didn' git no customuh dis mawnin'

TOMMY Wheah's 'is pants? Look in 'is pants!
(T B and SPIT rush to the hopper, grab ANGEL's pants, and start rifling the pockets ANGEL follows them, yelling)

ANGEL Hey! Git outta deah! Git outta deah!

T B Nuttn but a couple a stamps 'n' a boy-scout knife

SPIT (*taking the knife himself*) Oh baby, kin I have dis?

ANGEL (*follows SPIT*) No, I need it

SPIT No, yuh don't

ANGEL Aw, Spit, gimme my knifel

SPIT (*mocking his accent*) Watsa ma'? Piza Tahana? (*He spits at him*) Right innee ear! Ha!

ANGEL (*backs a step and wipes out his ear with a finger*) Ah, yuh louse! Ast me fuh sumpn sometime 'n' see watcha git

TOMMY Give 'im 'is knifel

SPIT Da hell I will!

ANGEL Aw, Spit, gimme my knifel Tommy, make 'im, will yuh?

TOMMY Gimme dat knifel

SPIT What fuh?

TOMMY (*makes a fist and waves it in front of SPIT's nose*) Fuh dis right in yuh bugle! (*He grabs the knife and examines it*) Gese, dat's a knife! Five blades! Boy, I'd like one like 'at
(*Enter from the lower tenement door, a young BOY of about twelve, a bit timid, neatly dressed, obviously Semitic features*)

ANGEL Aw, Tommy, I need it I godda use it Honest!

TOMMY (*gives him his knife*) Here! Stop squawkin'! Don' say I nevuh gave yuh nuttin'!

ANGEL. Tanks, Tommy Dat's white

TOMMY (*good-naturedly*) Ah, shaz ap! (*To DIPPY, who sits reflectively picking his nose*) Hey, Dippy! Pick me a big juicy one! (*DIPPY grins, rolls the resinous matter into a little ball,*

and flicks it at TOMMY TOMMY laughs, and trots up the street to join the others who are seated on a tenement stoop The TALL MAN turns from his conversation with his companion, and calls to DIPPY, "Hey, you!"

DIPPY What?

THE TALL ONE Wanna run a errand fuh me?

THE SQUAT ONE (offers) I'll go, chief What is it?

DIPPY Sure Wheah?

THE TALL ONE (points to a tenement house up the block) 418 fourth floor Mrs Martin Tell her a friend a hers wants a see her here

DIPPY O K 418? O K (He trots off)

GIMPTY (who has looked up at the sound of THE TALL MAN's voice) Don't I know you from somewhere? (The stranger's lips compress—"no") I could've sworn I

SQUAT MAN (comes over and mutters in a thick voice full of threat) He said no, didn' he? (The other restrains him with a touch on the arm)

GIMPTY Sorry (He looks down at his drawing The two walk away, and stand leaning against the wall, talking in low tones The boys on the stoop suddenly notice the little Jewish boy who is peering over the wharf)

T B Hey, look! Deah's 'at new kid 'at moved aroun' a block

SPIT, 'At's 'at Jew kid! (They rise and come down toward him)

TOMMY Hey, kid!

ANGEL Hey, kid!

THE JEWISH BOY (looks up) Wadda yuh want?

SPIT Come heah, Ikey! Come on! Don' be so slow (He comes over, eager to join them yet scared)

TOMMY Yew da noo kid onna block, aintcha?

THE JEWISH BOY Yeah

TOMMY Watsya name?

THE JEWISH BOY Milton Milton Schwartz

TOMMY Yuh wanna belong tuh are gang?

MILTY (eagerly) Yeah Shuah

TOMMY Got 'ny dough? Yuh godda be ineetiated

MILTY I god tree sants

TOMMY Gimme it!

SPIT (prodding him in the ribs) Give it tuh 'um!

T B (prodding him harder and pulling him around) Go on!

TOMMY (pulling him back) Come on! Don' hole out! (MILTY fishes out three cents and hands them to TOMMY) 'At's all yuh got?

MILTY Yeah

SPIT. Sure?

MILTY Hones'

TOMMY Soich 'im!

*(They start to go through his pockets)*MILTY *(turns his pockets inside out)*

Don'! Yuh don' haf tuh Look!

SPIT Ah, you punk!

TOMMY Listen, yew! If yuh wanna belong to dis gang, yuh godda git a quatuh

MILTY A quatuh? Wheah ahm gon na git a quatuh fum?

SPIT Fum yuh ole lady

MILTY She woodn gumme no quatuh

SPIT Yuh know wheah she keeps huh money, doncha?

MILTY Dat's a sin tuh steal

SPIT *(mocking his accent)* Wassa mattuh, Ikey?

MILTY Don' make fun on me, I can' help it

SPIT *(contemptuously)* Yuh scared tuh snitch a quatuh? Gese, she won' fin' out

MILTY Yes, she would

SPIT *(still mocking him)* Oh, she counts huh money all a time, huh, Jakey Ikey?

MILTY Stop dat! Gimme back my tree sants I don' wanna hang out wid youse

TOMMY *(to SPIT)* Yuh godda watch-pocket, aintcha?

SPIT Yeah

TOMMY Guard dis dough! *(He hands the money to SPIT, who puts it in his pocket They walk away, completely ignoring MILTY)*MILTY *(follows them, murmuring tremulously)* Gimme back my tree sants!SPIT *(whispers to the others)* Let's cockalize him!

ANGEL Wadda yuh say, Tommy?

TOMMY O K

T B Come on!

(ANGEL crosses nonchalantly behind MILTY, then crouches on his hands and knees unnoticed The others turn and slowly approach him Suddenly TOMMY pushes MILTY, who stumbles backward and trips over ANGEL, feet flying up They all pounce on the prostrate boy, pin his arms and legs to the ground, unbutton his pants, pull up his shirt)

TOMMY Gimme some a dat doit!

SPIT *(scoops up a handful of dirt)* Heah!*(They rub it into MILTY's groin He kicks and screams, hysterically laughing at the sensation When he's through rubbing in the filth, TOMMY coughs up a huge wad of saliva and spits on MILTY's organ Each of them spit, once round the circle The TALL ONE and the SQUAT ONE laugh A tattoo of heels running down the street! A whirlwind hits the group, and the boys are dispersed right and left. The whirlwind is a girl not much bigger than TOMMY, with a face resembling his—pushed-up nose and freckles She slaps and pulls and*

pushes the boys, who scatter away, laughing and shouting. She stands there, eyes blazing.

TOMMY Aw, scram, will yuh, Drina! Scram!

DRINA Shut up! *(She helps the sobbing MILTY to his feet, brushes him off, and wipes his face, comforting him. On second glance she is not the child she seemed. Her simple dress, her hair combed back of the ears and held in place with a cheap celluloid clasp, her lithe, boyish figure combine to create the illusion of a very young girl. When she comforts MILTY, however, it is apparent in the mature quality of her solicitude that she is much older—in her earlier twenties. The TALL ONE grins at her. She throws him a contemptuous side glance and rebukes him sharply.)*

DRINA You ought to be ashamed of yourself, standing there and letting them pile up on this kid.

TOMMY Aw, Drina, will yuh butt outta this?

DRINA *(to the sniveling boy)* Are you hurt? *(To the TALL ONE)* Why didn't you stop 'em?

THE TALL ONE What fer? It'll do 'im good.

DRINA *(furiously)* Oh, yeah? I suppose it'll do you good if I crack your face, huh?

THE TALL ONE Oh, lady, yuh scare me!

DRINA Fresh guy, huh?

THE SQUAT ONE *(walks over to her, his face screwed up in disgust)* Shut yuh big mouth or I'll

THE TALL ONE *(sharply)* Hunk! Cut it! *(HUNK obeys instantly. They walk away to the bulwark.)*

TOMMY Aw, Drina, why dontcha butt outta my business?

DRINA Wait till I get you home, I'll show you butt out of *(TOMMY scratches his head. She places her hands on her hips and frowns.)* What are you scratchin' your head for? Are you buggy again? *(Her authoritative, maternal concern gives her the air of a little girl playing house.)*

TOMMY Aw, git out a heah or I'll bust yuh one!

DRINA That's fine talk, Tommy bust you one! *(He scratches again.)* There you go again! Scratchin'! *(She crosses to him.)* Come on home! I'm gonna wash your head.

TOMMY Aw, lemme alone. All a time yuh bodderin' me. *(Runs away from DRINA and climbs up the hopper like a monkey, out of her reach.)*

DRINA *(to GIMPTY)* Pete, why didn't you stop 'em?

GIMPTY I'm sorry, Drina. I didn't notice what was happenin'. I was thinkin' about somethin'.

DRINA Yeah? *(She turns to TOMMY, dangling high on his perch.)* Tommy, did you go to school today?

TOMMY Sure.

DRINA If you're lying, Tommy, I'll kill you.

TOMMY *(wiggling his toes at her)* Aw, nuts!

DRINA (*to MILTY, who is still sobbing*) What's the matter? Did they hurt you?

MILTY Dey took my money

DRINA They did? How much?

MILTY Tree sants

DRINA Tommy!

TOMMY What?

DRINA Did you take this boy's three cents?

TOMMY Nope

DRINA You did so!

TOMMY I di' not!

DRINA You did so!

TOMMY Well, I ain't got it

DRINA Who has? Who's got it? (To ANGEL) You?

ANGEL Not me
(DRINA looks accusingly at T B)

T B (*walks away, indignantly*)
Don't look at me!

TOMMY Go on, Spit, give 'im back 'is tree cents

DRINA (*turns on SPIT*) Oh, so you're the one! Come on!

SPIT (*thumps his nose*) Like hell I will

DRINA Come on!

SPIT Frig you!

DRINA (*flaring*) I'll crack you . . . you talk like that!

SPIT Ah, I'll sock yuh inna tit (*She smacks him. He clenches his fist and draws it back ready to swing*)

TOMMY (*jumps from the hopper and rushes at SPIT, fists clenched, arms raised in fighting position*) Cut dat out, yuh louse!

SPIT Well she smacked me foist
She smacked me foist No dame kin smack me foist an' get away wid it

TOMMY Give 'er dat dough

SPIT What fuh?

TOMMY Give her da dough Dat', what fuh

SPIT Yeah?

TOMMY Yeah

SPIT Ah, yuh mudduh's chooch!

TOMMY Ah, yuh fadduh's doop!

DRINA Keep quiet, Tommy! (To SPIT) Come on! Come on!

TOMMY Hurry up! Give 'er dat dough! (*Pause SPIT grudgingly gives her the money TOMMY drops his hands and returns to the hopper, whistling DRINA hands the money back to MILTY*)

DRINA Here

MILTY Tanks!

DRINA That's all right You look like a nice boy Stay away from them They're no good They're bums

SPIT (*sullen, but seeking an ally*)
Come on, Angel Y'ain' bin in yet
Wanna go in?

ANGEL O K

SPIT Last one in's a stinkin' rotten egg!

(*They rush off and jump into the water with great splashes T B remains near the hopper, watching Off right voices are heard A tall, lean, soft-spoken gentleman, middle-aged, wearing shell-rimmed glasses and carrying a pipe, appears at the gate He is followed by a plumpish man of about the same age PHILIP opens the gate for them, smiling*)

PHILIP Hello, daddy!

PHILIP'S FATHER Hello, son Shoulders back! (*PHILIP straightens*) Attaboy Where's Jeanne?

PHILIP She went to find Charles

PHILIP'S FATHER Oh? And where's he?

PHILIP I don't know

PHILIP'S FATHER (*goes up the street, looks into the tenement hallway He shakes his head in disapproval and turns to his companion*) Sav, Jones! Look at this at our back door!
(*JONES nods*)

DRINA (*to GIMPTY*) You let them take his money without even interfering Shame on you!

GIMPTY I told you I didn't notice what was happening My mind was on somethin' else

DRINA Ah, you're always sticking up for them. (*To TOMMY*) Tommy! I'm

gonna get some kerosene and clean your head right away

TOMMY Aw—w—w

DRINA Don't aw—w—w me! (*She walks up the street TOMMY jumps down from the hopper and dives into the water*)

PHILIP'S FATHER Hm! Whose property is this?

JONES I think J and J I'm not sure, Griswald

GRISWALD Why don't they keep it in repair?

JONES What for! It's valuable stuff as it is No upkeep

GRISWALD (*gasps at the stench that comes out of the building*) Phew! What do they do? Use this hallway as a latrine?

JONES Probably

GRISWALD Hm! Terrible!

JONES Well, these people have to live some place

GRISWALD (*groping in his coat pockets*) Hm Forgot my tobacco pouch Will you run up and get it for me, son?

PHILIP Sure, daddy! Where is it?

GRISWALD Now, let me see I think it's I'd better go myself (*Turns to JONES*)

JONES I'll go up with you

GRISWALD We'll be down in a minute Ask Charles to wait for us

PHILIP Certainly, daddy

GRISWALD Thanks, son (*They go off into the apartment house* DIPPY comes running down the sidewalk)

DIPPY I fuhgot Wot wuzat name? Moutle?

THE TALL ONE Martin!
(HUNK, the squat man, cautions him with a tug GIMPTY's head jerks up He stares at the TALL ONE)

HUNK Maybe I better go

THE TALL ONE O K 418, fourth floor (*To DIPPY*) Nevuh mind, kid (*To HUNK*) And while yuh at it, look in at tailor's I tole yuh

HUNK (*nods*) Check! (*Exit HUNK up the sidewalk*)

DIPPY I'll go I'll go git her

THE TALL ONE Beat it!

DIPPY Don' I git nuttin'? I went part a da way

THE TALL ONE Nuttin' fer nuttin' Beat it!

DIPPY Ah, dat's a lousy trick tuh play on a kid

THE TALL ONE (*raises his foot to kick DIPPY*) Come on!
(DIPPY runs to the ladder, grumbling, climbs over, yells)

DIPPY Hey! Yew! (*The TALL ONE turns to look*) Go tuh hell! (*And he quickly jumps into the water* The TALL ONE laughs, comes down to the edge of the wharf, and watches DIPPY splash away)

GIMPTY (*snaps his fingers Sudden recollection*) Martin! Baby-face Martin!

THE TALL ONE (*wheels to face GIMPTY, one hand reaching under his coat for a shoulder holster*) I ain't Martin, you bastard!

GIMPTY Don't you remember me?

MARTIN O K Yew asked fer it an' yuh git it!

GIMPTY I'm Gimpty Remember?

MARTIN Gimpty?

GIMPTY Sure, Baby-face I

MARTIN Sh! Shat ap! My name's Johnson Git it? Johnson

GIMPTY We were kids here Don't you remember? I was one of the gang

MARTIN (*squints at him carefully for a long time*) Yeah

GIMPTY You don't have to worry about me

MARTIN I ain't worryin' about you I'm worryin' about me (*His hand emerges slowly from under his coat*) You wuz dat funny kid who used to mind my clothes when I went swimmin'

GIMPTY Yeah

MARTIN Yeah 'At's right Kin yuh still keep yer lips buttoned up?

GIMPTY I guess so

MARTIN Yuh guess so! Yuh better find out And God-damn quick!

GIMPTY You know me, Marty, I
(*A man comes out of the East River Terrace*)

MARTIN Sh! (*MARTIN waits till the man is out of hearing, then relaxes*)
O K Ony, I'm tellin' yuh, if it wuz anybody else, so help me God, I'd
(*Gestures with thumb and forefinger, as if reaching for his gun*)

GIMPTY Thanks What did you do to your face?

MARTIN Operation Plastic, dey call it

GIMPTY Oh! And you dyed your hair, too

MARTIN Yeah I guess yuh read about me

GIMPTY Sure You're the headliner these days

MARTIN God-damn right! (*Pauses Looks around reminiscently and nods toward the East River Terrace Apartments*) Hey, dat's somethin' new, ain't it?

GIMPTY No It's been up a couple of years

MARTIN Yeah? What is it?

GIMPTY One of the swellest apartment houses in town

MARTIN Yuh don't tell me! Well, what do yuh know!

GIMPTY Yeah You have to have blue blood, a million bucks, and a yacht to live in there, or else you have to
(*Breaks off, moodily*)

MARTIN What?

GIMPTY Oh, nothin'

MARTIN Come on! I don't like 'at If you're gonna say it, say it

GIMPTY It's nothin' You see over there? They got a floatin' dock

MARTIN Yeah What's it doin' there? Right by de ole wharf We used to pee over deah remember?

GIMPTY Yeah

MARTIN Uh-huh (*Regards GIMPTY quizzically*) What's your racket?

GIMPTY I'm an architect

MARTIN What's dat?

GIMPTY I design hous-s

MARTIN Yuh don't say! What do yuh know! Little Gimpty, an' look at 'im! An architect! Well, I always knew yuh'd come trew Yuh had somethin' here, kid! (*Taps his head*) Yep, Well, I'm glad tuh see yuh doin' O K, Gimpty Not like dese udder slob's Yuh must be in a big dough, huh?

GIMPTY (*laughs*) Nine out of ten architects are out of work

MARTIN Yeah?

GIMPTY Yeah

MARTIN So what da hell's a good?

GIMPTY That's the question Don't ask me I don't know Strictly speakin', I'm not even an architect You see, before you're an architect, you got to build a hcruse, an' before

anybody'll let you build 'em a house,
you got to be an architect

MARTIN Sounds screwy

GIMPTY Yeah, I guess it is Besides,
nobody's building any more, anyway

MARTIN An' fer dat yuh had tuh go
tuh high school?

GIMPTY College, too

MARTIN College? Yuh went tuh col-
lege?

GIMPTY Six years

MARTIN Six years? Why, yuh son uv
a bitch, yuh're marvelous!

GIMPTY Well, I won a scholarship,
and Mom worked like hell and
here I am I was doin' a little work
for the government, but

MARTIN Oh, yeah?

GIMPTY No don't get excited
On a slum clearance project But
that folded up I'm on home relief
now

MARTIN Oh!
*(A MAN comes down the street and
enters the tenement He bangs the
door MARTIN starts and looks back
jerkily)*

GIMPTY Say, is it so smart for you
to come here? With that big reward

MARTIN I ain' here I'm out West
Read da papers

GIMPTY Have you seen your mother
yet?

MARTIN No Dat's one reason why
I come back I ain't see de old lady
'n seven years I kind a got a yen
Yuh know?

GIMPTY Sure I saw her here
day before yesterday

MARTIN Yeah? I taught she might
be aroun' How's she look?

GIMPTY All right

MARTIN Gese Seven years! Since a
day I come out a reform school Say,
yew came down 'ere wid her tuh
meet me, didn' cha?

GIMPTY Yeah

MARTIN Sure 'At's right

GIMPTY Well, you've gone a long
way since then

MARTIN Yeah

GIMPTY You know, Marty, I never
could quite believe it was you

MARTIN Why not?

GIMPTY To kill eight men?

MARTIN Say, what ta hell a yuh
tryin' tuh do? Tell me off, yuh bas-
tard Why, I'll

GIMPTY No, Marty

MARTIN Say, maybe yuh changed,
huh? Maybe yuh become a rat May-
be yuh'd like tuh git dat faw grand
'at's up fuh me

GIMPTY You know better

MARTIN I'm not so sure Fawty-two
hundred bucks is pretty big dough
fer a joik like yew

GIMPTY. You can trust me

MARTIN Den don' gimme any a dat crap! What ta hell did yuh tink I wuz gonna do, hang aroun' 'is dump wait-in' fer Santa Claus tuh take care a me, fer Chris' sake? Looka yew! What a yew got? Six years yuh went tuh college an what da hell a yuh got? A lousy handout a thoity bucks a month! Not fer me! I yain't like yew punks starvin' an' freezin' fuh what? Peanuts? Coffee an'? Yeah, I got mine, but I took it Look! *(Pulls at his shirt)* Silk Twenty bucks Look a dis! *(Pulls at his jacket)* Custom tailored—a hunderd an' fifty bucks Da fat a da land I live off of An' I got a flock a dames at'd make yew guys water at da mout' At'd make yew slobs run off in a dark corner when yuh see dere picture an play pocket-pool

GIMPTY Ain't you ever scared?

MARTIN Me? What of? What ta hell, yuh can't live faever Ah, I don' know Sure! Sometimes I git da jitters An' sometimes I git a terrific yen tuh stay put, an' Ah, ta hell wid it! Say, do yew remember dat kid Francey?

GIMPTY Francey?

MARTIN She wuz my goil when we were kids

GIMPTY Oh, yeah She was a fine girl I remember

MARTIN Yew bet Ey don' make no more like her I know I had 'em all Yuh ain't seen her around, have yuh?

GIMPTY No

MARTIN Hoid anythin' about her?

GIMPTY No

MARTIN Gee, I got a terrific yen tuh see dat kid again At's why I come back here I wonder what she's doin' Maybe she got married Nah, she couldn't! Maybe she died Nah, not Francey! She had too much on a ball, too much stuff guts Yeah, she wuz like me Nuttin' kin kill Baby-face Martin an' nuttin' kin kill her Not Francey Gese, I wonder what's become a her?

GIMPTY She's the girl whose uncle owns a tailor shop around the corner, isn't she?

(MILTY strolls over to the parapet and stands looking into the water)

MARTIN Yeah Yuh remember her now

GIMPTY Sure I remember her, all right

MARTIN I tole Hunk, he's one a my boys, tuh look in 'ere an' see if he could git her address Gese, I gotta see dat kid again!

(SPIT climbs out of the water, goes to MILTY and, in one sweep of his arm, tears MILTY's fly open)

SPIT Tree bagger!

MILTY Stop dat!

SPIT *(threatening him)* What?

TOMMY *(follows SPIT over the parapet)* Aw, cut it out, Spit We gave 'im enough fuh one time

SPIT I'll knock 'im intuh da middle a next week!

TOMMY *(tearing open SPIT's fly)* Home run!

(The rest of the KIDS climb out of the water MILTY joins them in laughing at SPIT's discomfiture)

SPIT (turning on MILTY) What a yuh laughin' at?

DIPPY Yeah, what?

SPIT Sock 'im, Dippy

DIPPY Aw, I could lick 'im wid one han' tied behin' my back (Taps MILTY's shoulder with his clenched fist in rhythm to) Tree, six, nine, da fight is mine, I kin lick yew any ole time Tree, six, nine, da

MILTY Git outa heah Lemme alone (He swings at DIPPY, who retreats frightened)

SPIT (grabbing MILTY roughly by his shirt) Oh a tough guy, huh?

TOMMY I said leave 'im alone We g've 'im enough fuh one time

SPIT (releases MILTY and goes to TOMMY, threateningly) Wheah da hell a yuh come off, all a time tellin' me what tuh do?

TOMMY I'll put yew out like a light

SPIT (spitting at TOMMY) Right inna nose!

TOMMY (ducks, and the wad of saliva flies over his head) Miss! Now yuh git yer lumps!

SPIT Try it! Wanna make somethin' out uv it? Come on! Come on! (He starts dancing in front of TOMMY, waves his fists and mutters dre threats TOMMY suddenly gives him one terrific blow and SPIT collapses, his nose bleeding)

GIMPTY Hey!

TOMMY Hay fuh hosses! It wuz comin' tuh him (To MILTY, patting his back) O K, kid! Yew kin stick aroun' (HUNK enters down the sidewalk)

T B Hey, Tommy, len' me a couple a my pennies I wanna practice pitch-in'

TOMMY O K (They pitch pennies from the hopper to the sidewalk)

MARTIN (to GIMPTY) Da kids aroun' here don' change! (Turns, meets HUNK's suspicious stare at GIMPTY, to HUNK) He ain' nuttin' tuh worry about

HUNK It's your funeral as well as mine

MARTIN Did yuh git huh address?

HUNK Yuh mudder's out Deah wuz no answer

MARTIN Francey What about huh?

HUNK Dee old joker said ee didn' know, but ee gimme da address of her aunt in Brooklyn She might know

MARTIN Well, hop a cab an' git it

HUNK (making a wry face) Brooklyn?

MARTIN Yeah

HUNK Oh, hell!

MARTIN Come on! Stop crappin' aroun'

MUNK Awright

(Exit up the sidewalk)

SPIT (to **PHILIP**, who has appeared on the terrace to watch the fight)
Whadda yuh lookin' at, huh Yuh nosey li'l

PHILIP Nosey nothing It's a free country, isn't it?

TOMMY Hey, wee-wee, what ah yuh, a boy 'r a goil?

T B He's a goil, cantcha see?

PHILIP I'm a man!

(**T B** razzes him loudly *Philip razzes loudly back*)

T B Wassamattuh? Yew a wise guy?

PHILIP Yes, I am

T B Oh, yeah?

PHILIP I can name all the Presidents of the United States Can you?

T B What? Tommy kin

PHILIP Ah-h-h!

TOMMY I used tuh be able tuh

T B Ah, I bet yuh I bet yuh a dollar ee kin I bet yuh

PHILIP All right

T B Aw right what?

PHILIP I'll bet you a dollar

T B What?

PHILIP (takes a dollar bill from his pocket and proudly waves it aloft)
Put up your dollar!

DIPPY Gese, a buck!

T B (slaps his cheek in amazement)
A whole real live dollar my gawd!
(**ANGEL** and **SPIT**, impressed, exclaim and whistle)

PHILIP Aw, you haven't even got a dollar

T B Yeah, well show 'im, Tommy, anyway Show 'im! Jus' show 'im up, will yuh?

PHILIP Washington, Adams, Jefferson Go on! Name the next three!

TOMMY Madison Harrison
no

PHILIP Wrong!

TOMMY Well, I used tuh know 'em I fergit

PHILIP Aw-w

TOMMY Well, who cares, anyway? Yuh li'l sissy! Let's cockalize 'im! Whadda yuh say? Come on! (*Chorus of approval They start climbing up the wall, but the DOORMAN appears just in time*)

DOORMAN Get out of here! (*He gives them a dirty look, then exits, closing the gate*)

TOMMY Wait till I git yew I'll fix your wagon! Come heah, guys We gotta git dat kid away from deah We gotta git him
(*The gang all huddle about TOMMY, whispering Three smaller BOYS straggle down the street and sit on the curb They try to insinuate their way into the conclave*)

TOMMY (*to the three smaller boys*) Hey, whata yew want? (*The three smaller boys don't answer, but are ready for a fight*) Angel, tell yuh kud brudder tuh git da hell outta heah!

ANGEL Beat it!

TOMMY Go home and tell yuh mud-der she wants yuh!

ANGEL (*rises, rushes the kids The smallest stops to fight him, but ANGEL routs them and they flee up the sidewalk*) Dat crazy brudduh a mine! (*DRINA enters down the street, carrying a can of kerosene*)

MARTIN Well, keep yer nose clean, Gimpty, an' yer lips buttoned up tight, see?

GIMPTY Forget it!
(*MARTIN exits up the sidewalk, eyeing DRINA as she passes him*)

DRINA Come on, Tommy

TOMMY Not now, I'm busy

DRINA Tommy, don't be like that, will you? You can't go around with a head full of livestock

TOMMY I ain't got no bugs

DRINA (*grabbing him, as he pulls away*) Let me see come here! (*She examines his head*) Whew! You ain't! You got an army with a brass band Come on home

TOMMY Wassamattuh wid tuh-night?

DRINA Tonight I got a stroke meetin' I don't know what time I'll be home

TOMMY Aw, yew an' yuh lousy meetin's

DRINA It ain't no fun for me, Tommy Come on an' let's get you cleaned up

TOMMY Aw, Drina!

DRINA I don't like it any more than you do

TOMMY Gese, look it! (*He points up the street, and DRINA relaxes her hold on him TOMMY rushes off under the hopper and dives into the water with a "Whee-ee"* The other KIDS laugh and then straggle up the street to sit in a huddle on the doorstep of a tenement house)

DRINA Tommy!

GIMPTY (*laughs DRINA looks at him He smiles understandingly*) You've got a tough job on your hands, Drina

DRINA (*peering over the wharf, following TOMMY with her eyes*) He's really a good kid

GIMPTY (*also watches TOMMY, whom we can hear thrashing the water with a clock-work, six-beat crawl*) Sure

DRINA Just a little wild

GIMPTY Hey Tommy's got a good crawl-kick!

DRINA (*calling*) Tommy! Come on! (*TOMMY shouts under the water, making a noise like a seal DRINA laughs against her will*) What are you gonna do with a kid like that?

GIMPTY (*laughs*) I don't know

DRINA (*seating herself on the parapet, next to GIMPTY*) It's not that he's dumb, either I went to see his teacher yesterday She said he's one of the smartest pupils she's got But he won't work Two weeks he played hookey

GIMPTY I don't blame him

DRINA I can't seem to do anything with him It was different when Mom was alive She could handle him and between us we made enough money to live in a better neighborhood than this If we win this strike, I'm gonna move, get him outta here the first thing

GIMPTY Yeah That's the idea

DRINA (*noticing his drawings*) What've you got there? More drawings?

GIMPTY Couple a new ideas in community housing Here! See? (*He passes the drawing pad to her*)

DRINA (*studies them and nods admiringly*) Yeah They're beautiful houses, Pete But what's the good? Is anybody going to build them?

GIMPTY No

DRINA (*handing back the drawings*) So what?

GIMPTY All my life I've wanted to build houses like these Well I'm gonna build 'em, see? Even if it's only on paper

DRINA A lot of good they'll do on paper Your mother told me you've even given up looking for a job lately

GIMPTY (*suddenly bitter and weary*) Sure What's the use? How long have you been on strike now?

DRINA A month

GIMPTY Picketin' an' fightin' an' broken heads For what?

DRINA For what? For two dollars and fifty cents a week extra Eleven dollars a month, Pete All toward rent So's Tommy an' I can live in a decent neighborhood

GIMPTY Yeah You're right there I've seen this neighborhood make some pretty rough guys You've heard about Baby-face Martin? He used to live around here

DRINA Yeah I read about it

GIMPTY I used to know him

DRINA You did? What was he like? (*TOMMY climbs up out of the water, breathless He lies on the parapet, listening*)

GIMPTY As a kid, all right more than all right Yeah, Drina, the place you live in is awfully important It can give you a chance to grow, or it can twist you— (*He twists an imaginary object with grim venom*) —like that When I was in school, they used to teach us that evolution made men out of animals They forgot to tell us it can also make animals out of men

TOMMY Hey, Gimpty

GIMPTY Yeah?

TOMMY What's evilushin? (*He clambers along the parapet and lies on his stomach in front of DRINA*)

GIMPTY (*looks at TOMMY a moment, smiles, and comes out of his dark mood*) What's evolution, Tommy? Well, I'll tell you A thousand million years ago we were all worms in the mud, and that evolution made us men

DRINA And women!

GIMPTY And women

TOMMY An' boys and gails?

GIMPTY And boys and girls

TOMMY Ah, I wuzn't even born a toutsan' million years ago

GIMPTY No, but your great, great, great, great grandfather and mother were, and before them their great, great, great, great grandfather and mother were worms

TOMMY Blah-h-h!

DRINA (*impressed*) It's like God!

GIMPTY It is God! Once it made dinosaurs—animals as big as that house

TOMMY As big as 'at?

DRINA Sure

TOMMY Wow!

GIMPTY Then it didn't like its work and it killed them Every one of them! Wiped 'em out!

TOMMY Boy! I'd like tuh see one a dem babies

GIMPTY I'll show you a picture some time

TOMMY Will yah?

GIMPTY Sure

TOMMY 'At'll be swell, Gimpty (*SPIT appears on the ladder and stops to listen, hanging from the top rung.*)

GIMPTY Once evolution gave snakes feet to walk on

TOMMY Snakes? No kiddin'!

SPIT (*sings in mockery*) Te-da-da-da-da-bushwah, te-da-da bushwah!

TOMMY Shat ap! Right innee eye! (*He spits SPIT jumps back into the water*)

DRINA Tommy, cut that out! See? You're like an animal

TOMMY Well he does it tuh all ee udduh kids Anyhow, what happened tuh duh snakes' feet?

GIMPTY Evolution took 'em away The same as ostriches could once fly I bet you didn't know that

TOMMY No

GIMPTY Well, it's true And then it took away their power to fly The same as it gave oysters heads

TOMMY Oysters had heads?

GIMPTY Once, yeah.

TOMMY Aw-w!

DRINA Sh, listen!

GIMPTY Then it took them away. "Now men," says Evolution, "now men"—(*Nods to DRINA, acknowledging her contribution*)—"and women

I made you walk straight, I gave you feeling, I gave you reason, I gave you dignity, I gave you a sense of beauty, I planted a God in your heart Now let's see what you're going to do with them An' if you can't do anything with them, then I'll take 'em away Yeah, I'll take away your reason as sure as I took away the head of the oyster, and your sense of beauty as I took away the flight of the ostrich, and men will crawl on their bellies on the ground like snakes or die off altogether like the dinosaur"

(A very attractive, smartly-groomed YOUNG LADY in a white linen suit comes out of the gate She brings a clean coolness into this sweltering street She has a distinctive, lovely face, high forehead, patrician nose, relieved by a warm, wide, generous mouth and eyes that shut and crinkle at the corners when she smiles—which she is doing now)

TOMMY Gee!

GIMPTY That scare you?

TOMMY Wow!

ANGEL *(who has been sitting on the tenement steps up the street watching T B and DIPPY climb the steam shovel, notices the woman come out of the gate)* Hey, Gimpty, heah's yuh goil friend!

GIMPTY Oh, hello, Kay!

KAY Hello, Pete *(Her manner is simple, direct, poised and easy She is a realist, no chichi, no pretense And she is obviously very fond of GIMPTY)*

DIPPY *(to T B)* Hey, Gimpty's goil fren come outta deah

T B *(rising)* No kid! No kid!

ANGEL Gee whiz! *(The THREE BOYS saunter down to KAY)*

DIPPY Do yew live in deah?

GIMPTY *(embarrassed)* Hey!

KAY *(laughs)* Yes

ANGEL Have dey really got a swimmin' pool in 'at joint?

KAY Yes A big one

DIPPY Ah you a billionairess?

KAY No

DIPPY Millionairess?

KAY No

GIMPTY Hey-y-y!

ANGEL Den what a yuh doin' coman' out a deah?

DRINA Angelo! *(To KAY)* Don't mind him!

KAY *(smiling)* Oh, he's all right

DIPPY I got it She's a soivant goil

T B Nah, she's too swell-dressed all a time
(KAY laughs)

GIMPTY *(squirming with embarrassment)* Look! Will you kids beat it? Scram! Get outta here! Go on!

DRINA Come on, Tommy! I'm gonna wash your head

TOMMY *(crawling over to the ladder)* Nah! Hey, Gimpty 'at evilushin guy

GIMPTY What about him?

TOMMY Did he make everything?

GIMPTY Yeah

TOMMY Bugs too?

GIMPTY Yeah

TOMMY (to DRINA) Deah yuh ah! God niakes bugs an' yew wanna kill 'em (Gently chiding her as if she were a naughty child) Is 'at nice? (He dives off the ladder into the water) Whee-e-e!

KAY He's very logical

DRINA Yeah That part's all right, but he's very lousy too, an' that part ain't (She calls) Tommy! Come on! (More splashing of the water from TOMMY)

DIPPY Wheel! Look! He's a flyin' fish! Do dat again, Tommy! Wait, I'm comin', Tommy! (He mounts the parapet) Look a me! I'm divin' a backjack! (He stands poised for a backjack, then looks back and downward, fearfully It's awfully high) Wait a minute! Wait . . . wait! (He climbs two rungs down the ladder Looks down Nods This is better) I'm divin' a backjack! Watch out, Tommy! (He jumps sprawling out of sight A tremendous splash KAY looks over the parapet laughing DIPPY calls up) How wuz 'at?

KAY Beautiful!

T B Stunks! (He walks off toward the hopper arm in arm with ANGEL TWO girls come out of the Terrace, and walk up the street, chattering T B and ANGEL follow them, mimicking their mincing walk, and making indecent remarks One of the GIRLS

stops and turns to slap ANGEL. The BOYS laugh and run off behind the hopper The TWO GIRLS go up the street, one indignant, the other giggling KAY has picked up GIMPTY's drawings and is admiring them DRINA stares enviously at KAY, at her modish coiffeur, at her smart suit, at her shoes KAY becomes conscious of the scrutiny and turns DRINA, embarrassed, drops her eyes, then calls to TOMMY

DRINA Tommy! Coming?

TOMMY (from the water) No-o-o!

DRINA Well, I'm goin' home I can't wait here all day (She goes)

GIMPTY They're using the back entrance to-day

KAY (handing him the drawing pad) Yes There's some trouble in front They've ripped up the whole street (She looks out across the river, and breathes deep) It's a grand day, isn't it?

GIMPTY Yeah

KAY Oh! I was talking to some of Jack's friends last night I thought they could find something for you (Produces a business card from her pocket) Here's a man who said you might come up and speak to him. Here's his card

GIMPTY (takes the card from her, and reads it) Del Block Oh, yeah . . . he's a good man Thanks! Geel Thanks!

KAY I don't know if it'll help much

GIMPTY This is swell of you! (He looks at her a moment, lost in admiration Then shyly, with a good deal

of hesitation and groping for the right words) I was telling Mom about you last night I been kind of going around the house like a chicken with its head chopped off and Mom asked me why So I told her

KAY What?

GIMPTY Oh, just a little about you How we'd got to talking here, and meeting every day, and what great friends we've become How you've been trying to help me And that I worship you!

KAY You didn't!

GIMPTY Well, I do Do you mind?

KAY (*deeply touched*) Mind? You fool! What'd she say?

GIMPTY She said you sounded like a very real, good person

KAY Good? Did you tell her all about me? About Jack?

GIMPTY Yeah

KAY Your mother must be a sweet woman I'd like to meet her some time

GIMPTY (*enthusiastically*) She'd be tickled Will you?

KAY Right now, if you like

GIMPTY Well, she's out for the afternoon

KAY Oh!

GIMPTY Maybe I can get her down here day after tomorrow, huh?

KAY (*pauses, then, a bit depressed*) I may not be here then I may leave tomorrow

GIMPTY Tomorrow?

KAY Night Jack's going on a fishing trip He wants me with him

GIMPTY Isn't that sudden?

KAY He's been planning it for some time

GIMPTY How long will you be gone?

KAY About three months

GIMPTY That's a long time

KAY Yes
(*Down the street strides a well-dressed, rather handsome man in his early forties, hard lines around the eyes At the moment he is hot and uncomfortable He eyes the tenements curiously as he passes them The DOORMAN appears as he starts to enter the gate He asks the DOORMAN in a cultured, quiet voice, "What happened in front?"*)

DOORMAN I'll tell you, Mr Hilton You see, the gas mains

KAY (*rises*) Hello, Jack!

HILTON (*turns around, sees KAY Surprised*) Hello! What're you doing here? He crosses to her)

KAY Oh, I just came out

HILTON (*takes off his panama, wipes the sweat band and mops his brow with a handkerchief*) Phew! It's been a hell of a day, arranging things at the office Well, I've made the plans for the trip. Everything's set.

The boat's in shape. I've talked to Captain Swanson
(DIPPY climbs up over the parapet, talking to himself)

DIPPY Hooray fuh me! I did a back-jack! (To GIMPTY) Wuz 'at good, Gimpty?

GIMPTY All right!

DIPPY (to KAY) Hey, Gimpty's goul friend, wuz 'at good?

KAY Beautiful
(DIPPY, patting his chest and gloating "Attaboy, Dippy" goes back into the water HILTON is puzzled and annoyed He looks at KAY)

HILTON What's all this about?

KAY Nothing

HILTON What's all this about?

KAY Nothing

HILTON (his voice begins to rasp)
Come on Let's go in

KAY It's nice out I'd like to take a walk first

HILTON You'll do that later Come on

KAY I have a little headache I want to stay out a few minutes more

HILTON Take an aspirin and you'll be all right Come on!

KAY Please!

HILTON We've a million things to do

KAY. You go ahead. I'll be right in

HILTON (casts a glance at GIMPTY).
What's the big attraction out here?

KAY Nothing

HILTON Then stop acting like a prima donna and come on in

KAY Please don't make a fuss

HILTON (suddenly loses his temper and snaps) It's not me it's you! Damn it, I've been tearing around all day like a madman, and I come home and find you behaving like a cheap

KAY Jack!

HILTON (bites his lip, controls himself, and mutters curtly) All right! Stay there! (He goes in KAY follows him to the gate, pauses there, uncertain Then indulges in a momentary flash of temper, herself)

KAY Oh let him! (She returns slowly)

GIMPTY Is that the guy?

KAY Yes (Then, not to be unfair) Don't judge him by this He's really not so bad He's going to be sorry in a few minutes He's so darn jealous His wife gave him a pretty raw deal You can't blame him for

GIMPTY (suddenly inflamed) All right! If it were anybody else, all right! But you? He can't treat you like that!

KAY (sits there a while in silence, thinking Finally, she speaks, slowly, almost in explanation to herself) I've been living with Jack a little over a year now He isn't usually like this. You see, he really loves me.

GIMPTY He has a funny way of showing it

KAY He wants me to marry him

GIMPTY Are you going to?

KAY I don't know

GIMPTY Do you love him?

KAY I like him

GIMPTY Is that enough?

KAY I've known what it means to scrimp and worry and never be sure from one minute to the next I've had enough of that for one lifetime

GIMPTY (*intensely*) But Kay, not to look forward to love God, that's not living at all!

KAY (*not quite convincing*) I can do without it

GIMPTY That's not true It isn't, is it?

KAY (*smiles wryly*) Of course not (*A very stout LADY with much bosom comes out of the gate, fondling a tiny, black dog*)

TOMMY (*clambering over the parapet, sees the dog and chuckles*) Look a dat cockaroach, will yuh? Hey, lady, wheeah didja git dat cockaroach?

FAT LADY Well, of all the little ! (*TOMMY starts to bark The dog yaps back, and struggles to escape The other boys climb up and bark in various keys The three SMALLER BOYS appear and join in the medley The stout LADY is distraught She shouts at them, but to no avail*) Get away from here, you little beasts!

SPIT In yuh hat, fat slob! (*And he continues barking*)

FAT LADY Wha-a-at? Doorman! (*To the frantic dog*) Quiet Buddy darling! Quiet! Doorman! (*The DOORMAN comes out on the run and chases the boys away They run en masse to the hopper TOMMY climbs up on it The SMALLER BOYS retire to the steps of an upper tenement doorway MR GRISWALD, PHILIP, and MR JONES come out of the East River Terrace Apartments*)

GRISWALD What's the matter?

DOORMAN Those kids! They're terrible, sir

PHILIP They wanted to hit me, too, daddy!

GRISWALD Oh, yes? Why? What did you do to them? (*Smiles at JONES*)

PHILIP Nothing

GRISWALD Sure?

PHILIP Honest, daddy, I didn't say anything to them

DOORMAN It's all their fault, sir

FAT LADY They're really horrible brats And their language!

TOMMY (*hanging from the hopper*) Ah, shat ap, yuh fat bag a hump!

GRISWALD You touch him again and I'll break your necks

TOMMY Balls to yew, faw eyes!

GRISWALD (*to PHILIP, as he takes his arm and walks him up the street*) The next time you hit them back.

PHILIP But they all pile up on you, daddy

GRISWALD Oh, is that so? Well, I think I'm going to buy you a set of gloves and teach you how to box
(*They continue up the sidewalk, followed by JONES*)

PHILIP Will you, daddy?
(*THE GOVERNESS and a young CHAUFFEUR in maroon livery meet them*)

GOVERNESS Bonjour, monsieur.

CHAUFFEUR (*saluting*) I'm sorry to keep you waiting, sir, but

GRISWALD (*waves them ahead*) That's all right Never mind (To PHILIP) The next time someone attacks you, you'll be able to defend yourself

MR JONES That's the idea!

TOMMY (*shouts up the street after them*) Yeah! Wid ee army an' navy behin' 'im! (*Gang laughs and shouts*)
TOMMY jumps down from the hopper
The FAT LADY waddles across to KAY)

TOMMY Come 'ere, guys, I got a scheme how we kin git dat kid an' cockalize 'im (*They gather in a huddle*)

ANGEL How?

TOMMY (*subsiding to a whisper*) Foist we git 'im inna hallway, an'

FAT LADY. The little Indians! They oughtn't to be allowed in the street with decent people
(*Exit the DOORMAN, closing the gate*)

GIMPTY No? What would you do with them?

FAT LADY Send them all away

GIMPTY Where?

FAT LADY I'm sure I don't know

GIMPTY Huh!
(*Great outburst of laughter from the huddle*)

T B Dat'll work! You'll see! Dat'll git 'im!

TOMMY Wait! Shat ap! I got maw
(*The conclave becomes a whispered one again*)

FAT LADY The little savages! They're all wicked It's born in them They inherit it

GIMPTY (*suddenly bursts out, a bitter personal note in his passion*) In heritance? Yeah You inherit a castle thirty stories over the river, or a stinkin' hole in the ground! Wooden heads are inherited, but not wooden legs nor legs twisted by rickets!
(*The FAT LADY is completely taken aback by this unexpected antipathy She looks at KAY, gasps, and walks away, head high, patting her arm*)
KAY smiles at GIMPTY sadly, sympathetically)

GIMPTY I'm sorry

KAY (*touches his hand*) Oh, Pete!
(*Another outburst The three smaller boys have crept down and joined the fringe of the huddle*)

TOMMY Dey're back again! Angel, will yuh tell yuhr kid brudduh tuh git tuh hell outta heah?

ACT TWO

SCENE—*The same, the following day, lit by a brilliant afternoon sun. The boys are playing poker with an ancient deck of cards, greasy and puffed, inches thick. Match sticks are their chips. Their faces are grave and intense. They handle their cards familiarly, caressing them like old gamblers.*

MARTIN lounges against the terrace wall and watches them with grim nostalgia

ANGEL (*throwing two match sticks into the pot*) I'll open fuh two. Hey, Spit, it's rainin'. Come on, decorate da mahogany!

T B (*adds his two*) O K. I'm in.

SPIT (*follows suit*) Heah's my two, Dippy.

DIPPY (*tosses in his match sticks, deliberately, one at a time*) I'm in.

ANGEL (*slapping down two cards*) Gimme two.

SPIT (*deals*) Aw, he's got tree uva kin'.

T B (*throws away one*) Gimme one. Make it good. (*SPIT deals him one*)

ANGEL Ah, yuh ain' got nuttin'.

SPIT He's got a monkey. I ain' takin' any. How many fuh yew, Dippy?

DIPPY (*studies his hand with grave deliberation*) I'll take five.

SPIT Yuh can' take five.

DIPPY (*the mental effort contorts his face*) Faw.

SPIT Yuh kin only take t'ree.

DIPPY (*after considerable hesitation*) Gimme one!

ANGEL (*inclining his head toward T B*) Say, T B, feel 'at bump I got. Feel it!

T B (*explores ANGEL's head with a finger*) Wow! Feel 'at bump Angel's got!

DIPPY (*leans over and feels the bump*) Boy! 'At's like 'n egg!

SPIT Wheah juh git it?

ANGEL Me ole man give it tuh me.

DIPPY Fuh what?

ANGEL Fuh nuttin'. Just like 'at, fuh nuttin'. Last night me ole man cumzin drunk.

SPIT (*impatiently*) Cum on, cum on whadda yuh do?

ANGEL (*raps his knuckles on the sidewalk*) I blow.

T B (*raps*) I blow.

SPIT (raps) I blow, too Dippy?

SPIT What?

DIPPY (raps) I blow

ANGEL About what?

T B Watcha got?

DIPPY What, Tommy?

} Together

ANGEL (reveals a pair of Jacks) A pair of Johnnies You?

TOMMY Dinch a heah? Boy, deah wuz a big fight at da Chink laundry las' night

T B (exhibits two pair, twos and threes) Two pair Deuces and trays (He reaches for the pot)

ANGEL No kiddin'

TOMMY Yeah

ANGEL Aw hell!

DIPPY How did it staht, Tommy?

SPIT Wait a minute! (Lays down three tens) Read 'em an' weep! Judge Schmuck thouty days!

TOMMY Oh a couple handkuh-chifs got snotty (They all roar with laughter) Did Wee-wee show up yet?

DIPPY I guess I ain't got nuttin' (SPIT gleefully takes in the match sticks Enter TOMMY, kicking a tin can before him The BOYS greet him)

DIPPY No, Tommy

ANGEL Don' worry I bin on a look-out furtim

TOMMY Hi yuh, guys Howza wawda?

DIPPY Yeah, we bin on a lookout furtim

SPIT Cold

TOMMY Whatcha playin' fuh?

ANGEL So, like I wuz tellin' yuh, las' night me old man come in stinkin' drunk So he stahts beatin' hell outta me ole lady Boy, he socks 'er all ovah da place! (SPIT laughs)

SPIT Owins Wanna play?

TOMMY (starts undressing) Deal me inna next han' Who's winnin'?

TOMMY What da hell a yuh laughin' at? Dat ain' so funny

T B I yam

TOMMY How much?

ANGEL No, dat ain' so funny Cause den ee picks up a chair and wants a wallop me wid it

T B Twenty-eight matches

DIPPY Whatcha do den?

TOMMY Twenty-eight cents boy, 'at's putty good! Hey, didja heah about it?

ANGEL So I grabs a kitchen knife dat big an' I sez, "Touch me, yuh louse, an' I give yuh dis"

T B Yeah?

ANGEL Yeah, yeah, I did So he laughs, so he falls or a flaw, an' he goes tuh sleep so he snores—
(*imitates a rasping snore*)— like at Boy, wuz ee drunk! Boy, he wuz stinkin'!
(*Enter MILTY down the sidewalk*)

TOMMY Hi, yuh, Milty! How's evtying?

MILTY Swell

TOMMY Attaboy
(*MILTY goes to MARTIN*)

MARTIN Well?

MILTY She wuz deah I tole huh She said not tuh come up She said tuh meet huh down heah

MARTIN O K Heah, kid, buy yer-self a Rols Royce (*He gives MILTY a half-dollar*)

MILTY Gee!

SPIT Whatcha git?

MILTY Oh, momma! Haffa buck!

SPIT (*shouting quickly*) Akey! Akey! Haffies!

MILTY (*also shouting quickly top-ping SPIT and holding up crossed fingers*) Fens! No akey! No akey!

SPIT (*throws down his cards and rises threateningly*) I said akey Come on, haffies

MILTY Yuh didn' have tuh finguh crossed

SPIT Don' han' me dat balonee! Gimme two bits

MILTY. Yuh didn't cross yuh finguh

SPIT (*thrusting his face into MILTY's*) Gimme two bits 'r I kick yuh inna slats

MILTY Yeah?

SPIT Yeah

MILTY Ah, yuh mudduh's chooch!

SPIT Ah, yuh fadduh's doop!

MILTY Hey, Tommy, do I gotta givim?

TOMMY Naw He didn' have 'is fin guhs crossed

SPIT I'll choose yuh fer it

MILTY Whadduh yuh tink I yam, a dope?

SPIT Ah, yuh damn up ahdist!

MILTY Look who's talkin'!

SPIT Ah, yew stink on ice!

TOMMY Stan' up tuh him Milty! Stan' up tuh him

MILTY (*suddenly thrusts his jaw forward*) Watsamatteh? Yew wann a fight?

SPIT Yeah

MILTY Join ee ahmy! Ha!
(*The boys roar at SPIT*)

SPIT (*raising a fist and twisting his face fiercely*) Ah!

MILTY (*raising his fist and returning the grimace*) Ah!

SPIT (*fiercer in grimace and growl*) Mah!

MILTY (*tops him*) Wah!
(*They stand there a moment, glaring at each other in silence, fists raised, faces almost touching, then SPIT turns in disgust and sits down again to his cards*)

TOMMY (*grins at MILTY's triumph*) Kimmeah, Milt! Yuh wanna play?

MILTY I dunna how

TOMMY Kimmeah, watch me I'll loin yuh
(*Two strange, tough-looking boys come down the street. They pause, watch a moment, confer, then wander over to the group*)

FIRST BOY Hey, which one a youse guvs is a captain a dis gang?

TOMMY (*doesn't even deign to look up*) Who wants know?

SECOND BOY Weah fum up da blocks

TOMMY Second Avenya gang?

FIRST BOY Yeah

TOMMY (*assorting his cards*) Yeah? Well, go take a flyin' jump at ta moon!

SECOND BOY Whooha leaduh?

TOMMY Me What about it? I pass
(*Throws down his cards, rises, turns to the enemy*) Wanna make sumpin out uv it?

SECOND BOY (*a bit frightened*) Yew tell 'im

FIRST BOY Yuh wanna fight are gang?

TOMMY Sure (*Turns to his gang*) O K felluhs? Yuh wanna fight da Second Avenyoo gang? (*They approve raucously*) TOMMY (*Turns back to the emissaries*) Sure!

FIRST BOY O K On are block?

TOMMY Yeah O K

SECOND BOY Satiday?

TOMMY (*asks the gang*) O K, Satidav, felluhs? (*They shout approval*) Faw o'clock? (*A little bickering about time, but they agree*) O K We'll be up deah Satiday faw o'clock an' boy, we'll kick the stuffin's outa youse!

SECOND BOY Yeah?

TOMMY Yeah! No bottles 'r rocks, jus' sticks 'n' bare knucks Flat sticks No bats

SECOND BOY Sure

TOMMY O K?

SECOND BOY O K!

TOMMY O K Now git da hell out a heah befaw I bust yuh one! Scram! (*The two boys run off. From a safe distance they yell*)

FIRST BOY Nuts tuh yew! Son uva bitch! son uva bitch!

SECOND BOY Satiday! We be waitin' faw yuh We kick da pants offa yuh!

(*TOMMY picks up a rock, hurls it after them. DIPPY rises, does the same. MARTIN laughs*)

ANGEL (*first noticing MARTIN*)
Shine, mistuh?

MARTIN O K, kid

ANGEL (*moves his box down to MARTIN and begins to shine his shoes*)

SPIT (*sneers at DIPPY*) Look at 'im trow, will yuh? Like a goil Yuh godda glass ahm? Cantcha trow a rock even?

DIPPY Yeah Kin yew trow bettuh?

SPIT (*picks up a rock, rises, looks for a target He spots a flower pot on a fire escape*) Watch! See at flowuh pot? (*He throws the rock and breaks the pot*)

TOMMY Pot shot! Pot shot!

MARTIN Say, at waz good pitchin' Yew kids like tuh git some dope on gang fightin'?

ANGEL Sure! Hey, felluhs, come heah! (*They crowd about MARTIN*)

MARTIN Foist ting is tuh git down ere oiluh' an yuh (*GIMPTY enters down the sidewalk, whistling cheerfully*) Hello, Gimpty!

GIMPTY Hello

MARTIN (*continues the lesson GIMPTY stops and listens*) Oiluh an yuh said, see? Dey won't be ready fuh yuh En I tell yuh kids what yuh wanna do Git a lot of old electric bulbs, see? Yuh trow 'em, and den yuh trow a couple a milk bottles .

an' some a dee udder kids git boit, an' den yuh charge 'em

TOMMY Yeah, but we made up no milk bottles, ony bare knucks an' sticks

MARTIN Yuh made up! Lissen, kid
When yuh fight, dee idee is tuh win It don' cut no ice how An' in gang fightin' remember, take out da tough guys foist Tree aw faw a yuh gang up on 'im Den one a yuh kun git behin' 'im an' slug 'im A stockin' fulla sand an' rocks is good fuh dat An' if ey're lickin' yuh, pull a knife Give 'em a little stab in ee arm Ey'll yell like hell an' run

TOMMY Yeah, but we made up no knives Gese, 'at ain' fair

GIMPTY What's a matter with you? What are you trying to teach these kids?

MARTIN Yew shut yer trap (*To TOMMY*) Lissen If yuh wanna win, yuh gotta make up yer own rules, see?

TOMMY But we made up dat .

MARTIN Yuh made up

TOMMY We kin lick 'em wid bare knucks fair and square

MARTIN Lissen, kid Ere ain' no fair an' ere ain' no square It's winnah take all An' it's easier tuh lick a guy by sluggin' 'im fum behin' 'en it is by sockin' it out wid 'im toe tuh toe Cause if yuhr hickin' 'im, en he pulls a knife on yuh, see? En wheah are yuh?

TOMMY Den I pull a knife back on him

MARTIN Yeah, but what's a good unless uh got one an' know how tuh use it?

TOMMY I know how tuh

GIMPTY Don't pay any attention to him, guys!

MARTIN Yew lookin' fer a sock in a puss?

GIMPTY If you kids listen to that stuff, you'll get yourselves in Dutch

TOMMY Aw, shat ap
(*The boys razz GIMPTY*)

MARTIN Git out a heah, yuh monkey! (GIMPTY, angry but impotent, walks away MARTIN turns to the boys again) See what I mean?

TOMMY Yeah, well, if I had a knife

MILTY Angel's godda knife

ANGEL Aw, I need it

MARTIN (*hands ANGEL a dime for the shine*)

TOMMY Yuh kin jus' loan it tuh me I'll give it back tuh yuh

ANGEL No, yuh won't Honest, I need it

SPIT Give it tuh him! Go on, or I'll track yuh one!

ANGEL No!

TOMMY Nevuh mind tuh hell wid 'im!

T B (*to ANGEL*) Ah, you stink on ice!

ANGEL Aw, shat ap!

T B Shat ap yuhself!

MILTY Look, Angel, I tell yuh what Ah! give yuh a quarteh fuh it Whad-da yuh say?

ANGEL Sure!

MILTY (*to MARTIN*) Change, Misteh?

MARTIN Yeah (*He gives MILTY two quarters in exchange for the half, then rises A newspaper in the gutter catches his attention He frowns, picks it up, reads it, wandering off to the tenement stoop, where he sits on a step, absorbed in the newspaper stem ANGEL runs to the hopper, finds his trousers, fumbles in the pocket, produces the knife and returns with it He completes the transaction with MILTY, who hands the knife to TOMMY*)

MILTY Heah, Tommy

TOMMY (*rises*) Wha' faw?

MILTY Fuh a present

TOMMY Yuh mean yuh givin' it tuh me?

MILTY Yeah Yuh kin keep it

TOMMY Gee, t'anks, Milt! Gese, 'at's swell t'anks!

MILTY Aw, dat's nuttin

TOMMY Aw, dat's a whole lot T'anks! Gee!

CHARLES (*the chauffeur, enters from the gate of the East River Terrace followed by PHILIP*)

T B Hey, Tommy I (He points to PHILIP The gang gathers under the hopper, in huddled consultation)

PHILIP I think I'll wait here, Charles

CHARLES Wouldn't you rather come with me to the garage?

PHILIP No

CHARLES But your mother said

PHILIP I'll wait here for them

CHARLES Yes, sir
(Exit CHARLES up the street PHILIP examines his wrist watch ostentatiously KAY appears on the terrace, finds a space in the shrubbery, leans over the balustrade, and signals to GIMPTY)

KAY Pete!

GIMPTY (rising and crossing toward her, beaming) Hello, Kay! How are you feeling?

KAY All right And you?

GIMPTY Like a million dollars!

KAY I'll be down in a second (She disappears behind the shrubs The conclave finished, all the boys saunter off in different directions, pretending disregard of PHILIP TOMMY, whistling a funeral dirge, signals T B with a wink and a nod of the head T B approaches PHILIP casually)

T B Hello, what time is it?

PHILIP Half past four

T B T'anks Gee, dat's a nice watch yuh got deah What kine is it?

PHILIP A Gruen

T B Boy, at's as nice as 'n Ingersoll (Coughs, then proudly tapping his chest, boasts) T B I got T B

TOMMY (on the tenement stoop) Hey, felluhs, come on inna hall heah I got sumpm great tuh show yuhs Come on, T B (They all whip up loud, faked enthusiasm)

T B OK (To PHILIP) Yuh wanna come see?

TOMMY Nah, he can't come Dis is ony fuh da gang (The others agree volubly that PHILIP can't join them in the mystery)

T B Aw, why not? He's a good kid

TOMMY (supported by a chorus of "Nahs") Nah, he can't see dis Dis is ony fuh da gang

PHILIP What is it?

T B Gee, I can't tell yuh but it's Gese, it's sumpm great!

TOMMY (to T B) Come on! Git da lead out a yuh pants!

T B Too bad dey won' letcha see it Boy, yuh nevuh saw anything like dat

PHILIP Well, I don't care I can't anyway I'm waiting for my father and mother We're going to the country

T B It'll only take a minute . . Hey, felluhs, let 'im come 'n' see it, will yuh? He's O K

TOMMY (*consenting with a great show of reluctance*) Well aw-night Let 'im come

TOMMY (*enters the tenement, followed by the others*)

T B Come on

PHILIP I don't know I expect my

T B Awright, it's yuhr loss!

T B (*starts up the sidewalk*)

PHILIP Wait! Wait! I'm coming! (*Runs to catch up with T B. As they reach the steps and enter, T B pushes him in the doorway, spits on his hands and follows him in. KAY enters.*)

GIMPTY (*beams. He is very happy*) Hello!

KAY Hello, darling (*There is a slight strain in her voice and attitude, which manifests itself in over-kindness and too much gentleness, as if she were trying to mitigate some hurt she is about to give him. They sit on the coping.*)

GIMPTY Well I got up early this morning and went down to a stack of offices looking for a job

KAY That's swell Did you find one?

GIMPTY Not yet But I will Wait and see

KAY Of course you will

GIMPTY Thanks to you

SPIT (*runs from the hallway, stops a second on the sidewalk, looking about, then grabs a large barrel stave,*

whacks his hand with it, whistles, and runs back into the tenement hallway)

KAY Did you see Del Block?

GIMPTY Yep

KAY Didn't he have anything for you?

GIMPTY Oh, we had a nice talk. He's a very interesting guy. He showed me some of his work. He's done some pretty good stuff (*Grins*). He asked me if I knew where he could find a job (*They both have to laugh at this*). He thinks you're pretty swell, too.

KAY Pete you've got to get something

GIMPTY I will

KAY I didn't know how important it was until yesterday

GIMPTY Hey, there!

KAY I used to think we were poor at home because I had to wear a made over dress to a prom. Yesterday I saw the real thing. If I hadn't seen it, I couldn't have believed it. I dreamt of it all night the filth, the smells, the dankness! I touched a wall and it was wet (*She touches her finger-tips, recalling the unpleasant tactile sensation. She shivers.*)

GIMPTY That house was rotten before I was born. The plumbing is so old and broken it's been dripping through the building for ages.

KAY What tears my heart out is the thought that you have to live there. It's not fair! It's not right!

GIMPTY It's not right that anybody should live like that, but a couple a million of us do.

KAY. Million?

GIMPTY Yeah, right here in New York New York with its famous skyline its Empire State, the biggest God-damned building in the world The biggest tombstone in the world! They wanted to build a monument to the times Well, there it is, bigger than the pyramids and just as many tenants *(He forces her to smile with him Then he sighs, and adds, hopelessly)* I wonder when they'll let us build houses for men to live in? *(Suddenly annoyed with himself)* Ah, I should never have let you see that place!

KAY I'm glad you did I know so much more about you now And I can't tell you how much more I respect you for coming out of that fine, and sweet and sound

GIMPTY *(his eyes drop to his withered limb)* Let's not get started on that

(PHILIP can be heard sobbing in the tenement hallway He flings open the door and rushes out, down the street into the apartment, crying convulsively, his clothes all awry The gang follows him from the hallway, yelling and laughing)

TOMMY *(holding PHILIP's watch)* Come on, let's git dressed an' beat it!

SPIT Let's grab a quick swim foist

TOMMY Nah!

SPIT Come on!

MILTY Betteh not

SPIT *(rushes off under the hopper and dives into the water)* Las' one in's a stinkin' rotten egg!

TOMMY *(throws the watch to T B)* Guard 'at watch and lay chuckee! *(All the boys except T B dive into the water)*

GIMPTY When I see what it's doing to those kids I get so mad I want to tear down these lice nests with my fingers!

KAY You can't stay here You've got to get out Oh, I wish I could help you!

GIMPTY But you have Don't you see?

KAY No I'm not that important

GIMPTY Yes, you are!

KAY I mustn't be Nobody must For your own good, you've got to get out of here

GIMPTY I will, damn it! And if I do maybe I'm crazy but will you marry me?

KAY Listen!

GIMPTY Don't get me wrong I'm not askin' you to come and live there with me But you see, if

KAY Listen! First I want you to know that I love you as much as I'll allow myself to love anybody Maybe I shouldn't have gone with you yesterday Maybe it was a mistake I didn't realize quite how much I loved you I think I ought to leave tonight

GIMPTY Why?

KAY Yes, I'd better
(*The chug of a small boat is heard*)

GIMPTY Why?

KAY I'd better get away while we
can still do something about this

GIMPTY How will that help?

KAY If I stay, I don't know what will
happen, except that we'll go on
and in the end make ourselves thor-
oughly miserable We'd be so wise to
call it quits now

GIMPTY Gec, I don't see it

KAY I do and I think I'm right
(*Pause She looks out over the river*)
There's the boat

GIMPTY (*pauses Turns to look*) Is
that it?

KAY Yes

GIMPTY (*irrelevantly, to conceal his
emotion In a dull monotone*) It's a
knockout I'm crazy about good boats
They're beautiful, because they're
designed to work That's the way
houses should be built like boats

KAY Pete, will you be here to-
night before I leave?
(*MARTIN looks up from his news-
paper to eye KAY*)

GIMPTY Don't go, Kay I'll do any-
thing Isn't there some way some-
thing?

KAY (*hopelessly*) What? (*Rises*) I
guess I'll go in now, and get my
things ready I'll see you later?
(*She presses his shoulder and exits*)

MARTIN rises, throws down his news-
paper and approaches GIMPTY)

MARTIN (*sucks his lips, making a
nasty, suggestive sound*) Say
dat's a pretty fancy lookin' broad
High class, huh? How is she? Good
lay? (*GIMPTY glares at him MARTIN
laughs*) Well, fer Chrs' sake, what's
a matter? Can't yuh talk?

GIMPTY Cut it out, Martin Just cut
it out!

MARTIN Lissen, kid, why don' yuh
git wise tuh yerself? Dose dames are
pushovers, fish fuh duh monkeys!

GIMPTY (*half rising, furious*) I said
cut it out!

MARTIN (*roughly pushes him back*)
Sit down, vew! (*A chuckle of con-
tempt*) Look what wantsa fight wid
me! Little Gimpty wansa fight wid
me! Wassamattuh, Gimpty? Wanna
git knocked off?
(*HUNK slouches down the street, fol-
lowed in a painfully weary shuffle
by a gaunt, raw-boned, unkempt
woman, sloppy and disheveled Her
one garment an ancient house dress
retrieved from some garbage heap,
black with grease stains Her legs
are stockingless, knotted and bulging
with blue, twisted, cord-like veins
Her feet show through the cracks in
her house slippers In contrast to the
picture of general decay is a face that
looks as if it were carved out of
granite, as if infinite suffering had
been met with dogged unyielding
strength*)

HUNK Hey!

(*She comes to a dead stop as she sees
MARTIN There is no other sign of
recognition, no friendliness on her
lips She stares at him out of dull,
hostile eyes*)

MARTIN (*his face lights, he grins He steps rapidly toward her*) Hello, Mom! How are yuh? (*Pause*) It's me (*No recognition*) I had my face fixed (*There is a moment of silence She finally speaks in an almost inaudible monotone*)

MRS MARTIN Yuh no-good tramp!

MARTIN Mom!

MRS MARTIN What're yuh doin' here?

MARTIN Aintcha glad tuh see me? (*She suddenly smacks him a sharp crack across the cheek*)

MRS MARTIN That's how glad I am

MARTIN (*rubs his cheek, stunned by this unexpected reception He stammers*) 'At's a great hello

MRS MARTIN Yuh dog! Yuh stinkin' yellow dog yuh!

MARTIN Mom! What kin' a talk is 'at? Gese, Mom

MRS MARTIN Don't call me Mom! Yuh ain't no son a mine What do yuh want from me now?

MARTIN Nuttin' I just

MRS MARTIN (*her voice rises, shrill hysterical*) Then git out a here! Before I crack yuh God-damn face again Git out a here!

MARTIN (*flaring*) Why, yuh ole tramp, I killed a guy fer lookin' at me da way yew are!

MRS MARTIN (*her voice rises, shrill, slowly Then, quietly*) Yeah You're a killer all right You're a

murderer you're a butcher, sure! Why don't yuh leave me ferget yuh? Ain' I got troubles enough with the cops and newspapers botherin' me? An' Johnny and Martha

MARTIN What's a mattuh wid 'em?

MRS MARTIN None a yer business! Just leave us alone! Yuh never brought nothin' but trouble Don't come back like a bad penny! Just stay away and leave us alone an' die but leave us alone! (*She turns her back on him, and starts to go*)

MARTIN Hey, wait

MRS MARTIN (*pauses*) What?

MARTIN Need any dough?

MRS MARTIN Keep yer blood money

MARTIN Yuh gonna rat on me gonna tell a cops?

MRS MARTIN No They'll get yuh soon enough

MARTIN Not me! Not Martin! Huh, not Baby-face Martin!

MRS MARTIN (*mutters*) Baby-face! Baby-face! I remember (*She begins to sob, clutching her stomach*) In here in here! Kickin'! That's where yuh come from God! I ought to be cut open here fer givin' yuh life murderer!!! (*She shuffles away, up the street, weeping quietly*) MARTIN stands there looking after her for a long time His hand goes to his cheek HUNK comes down to him, clucking sympathetically A boat whistle is heard)

HUNK How da yuh like 'at! Yuh come all away across a country jus' tuh see yer ole lady, an' what da yuh git? Crack inna face! I dunno, my mudder ain' like dat My mudder's always glad tuh see me

MARTIN (*low, without turning*) Shut up! Gese, I must a been soft inna head, so help me!

HUNK Yuh should a slugged 'er one

MARTIN Shut up! I must a bin crazy inna head I musta bin nuts

HUNK Nah! It's jus' she ain't gotta heart Dat ain'

MARTIN (*turns on HUNK, viciously, barking*) Screw, willyuh? Screw! (*Exit HUNK up the sidewalk MARTIN turns, looking after his mother Turns slowly onto the sidewalk, then notices GIMPTY*) Kin yuh picture dat?

GIMPTY What did you expect flags and a brass band?

MARTIN (*suddenly wheels and slaps GIMPTY*) Why—yew—punk!

GIMPTY What's the idea?

MARTIN Dat's ee idea fer shoot-in' off yer mou't I don' like guys 'at talk outa toin Not tuh me!

GIMPTY Who the hell do you think you are?

MARTIN (*claws his fingers and pushes GIMPTY's face against the wall*) Why, yuh lousy cripple, I'll

GIMPTY (*jerks his head free of MARTIN's clutch*) Gee, when I was a kid

I used to think you were something, but you're rotten see? You ought to be wiped out!

MARTIN (*his face twitching, the veins on his forehead standing out, kicks GIMPTY's crippled foot and shouts*) Shut up!

GIMPTY (*gasps in pain, glaring at MARTIN After a long pause, quietly, deliberately*) All right O K, Martin! Just wait!

MARTIN What? (*Reaches for his shoulder holster*) What's 'at?

GIMPTY Go on! Shoot me! That'll bring 'em right to you! Go on!

MARTIN (*hesitates He is interrupted by the excited voices of GRISWALD and PHILIP Cautiously he restrains himself and whispers*) I'll talk to yuh later I'll be waitin' right up thuh street, see? Watch yuh step (*GRISWALD appears behind the gate with PHILIP, who is sobbing The GOVERNESS tries to quiet PHILIP while she dabs his face with her handkerchief MARTIN goes up the street*)

GRISWALD It's all right, son! Now stop crying! What happened? Stop crying! Tell me just what happened?

GOVERNESS Attends, mon pauvre petit 'ere, let me wipe your face attends, attends!

PHILIP They hit me with a stick!

GRISWALD A stick!

PHILIP (*spread-eagling his arms*) That big!

GRISWALD (*furious*) I'll have them locked up I swear I'll send them to jail. Would you know them if you saw them?

PHILIP Yes, daddy

GRISWALD (*to the GOVERNESS*) You should have been with him After yesterday

GOVERNESS I told him to stay in the garden Madame said it was all right and she asked me to help Clara with the curtains in his room

(SPIT starts up the ladder, followed by the other boys DIPPY is frozen He is blue and shaking with cold His teeth are chattering)

DIPPY Look, I'm shivern' My teet' 'r' knockin'

TOMMY Yeah Yuh lips 'r' blue! Yuh bettuh git dressed quick, aw yuh'll ketch cold (*Looks down at MILTY who is climbing the ladder, behind him*) How do yuh like it, Milty?

MILTY (*grins from ear to ear*) Swell! (*As the boys appear over the parapet, T B rises from under the hopper, points to GRISWALD, and calls the danger-cry*)

T B Chickee! Putzo! Hey, felluhs! Chickee! Tommy! (*PHILIP sees the boys and points them out to GRISWALD*)

PHILIP There they are! They're the ones (*Points out TOMMY*) He's the leader!

GRISWALD That one?

PHILIP Yes (*SPIT, DIPPY, MILTY and ANGEL dash to the hopper, all yelling "Chickee!"*)

They gather up their clothes and run madly up the street, followed by T B TOMMY, stooping to pick up his clothes, trips, falls and is grabbed by GRISWALD, who shakes him violently)

GRISWALD What right did you have to beat this boy? What makes you think you can get away with that?

TOMMY (*struggling to escape*) Lemme go! Lemme go, will yuh? I didn' do nuttin' lemme go!

PHILIP (*jumping up and down with excitement*) He's the one! He's the got the watch, daddy!

TOMMY (*tries to break away and get at PHILIP*) I have not, yuh fat li' bastid!

GOVERNESS (*frightened, screams*) GRISWALD (*jerks TOMMY back*) Oh, no! Not this time! I'll break your neck!

PHILIP He's the one!

GRISWALD Give me that watch!

TOMMY I yain't got it!

PHILIP He has! He's got it!

GRISWALD (*turns to the GOVERNESS, peremptorily*) Jeanne! Call an officer! (*To TOMMY again*) Give me that watch!

TOMMY (*frightened by the police threat*) I yain't got it Honest, I yain't! (*Suddenly shouts up the street for help*) Hey, felluhs! (*The GOVERNESS stands there, paralyzed*)

GRISWALD *Jeanne, will you call an officer! Come on! Hurry!*

GOVERNESS *Oui, oui, monsieur! (She runs up the sidewalk in a stiff-legged trot)*

TOMMY *(stops struggling for a moment)* Aw, Mister, don't toin me ovuh tuh da cops, will yuh? I won touch 'im again We do it to allce udduh kids, an 'ey do it tuh us Dat ain' nuttin'

GRISWALD No? I ought to break your neck

TOMMY Oh, yeah? *(He suddenly pulls away, almost escaping GRISWALD puts more pressure on the arm TOMMY calls to the gang)* Hey, felluhs! *(GRISWALD twists his arm double TOMMY begins to cry with pain, striking at GRISWALD)* Yuh joik! Ow, yuh breakin' my ahm! Hey, Gimpty!

GIMPTY Have a heart! You're hurtin' that kid You don't have to

GRISWALD Hurt him! I'll kill him! *(MILTY runs down the street, holding out the watch)*

MILTY Heah yuh ah! Heah's duh watch! Leave 'em go misteh! He didn' do nuttin'! Leave 'im go! *(He starts pounding GRISWALD TOMMY frees his hand GRISWALD hooks his arm around TOMMY in a stranglehold, and with the free arm pushes MILTY away)*

GRISWALD *(to MILTY)* Get out of here, you

TOMMY Hey, yer chokin' me! Yer chokin' me! *(Both hands free, he gropes in the trousers he has clung*

to Suddenly he produces an open jackknife and waves it) Look out! I gotta knife I'll stab yuh! *(GRISWALD only holds him tighter, trying to capture the knife A flash of steel GRISWALD groans and clutches his wrist, releasing TOMMY TOMMY and MILTY fly up the street GRISWALD stands there stunned, staring at his bleeding wrist)*

PHILIP Daddy! Daddy! Daddy! *(He begins to sob at the sight of blood)* *(The DOORMAN comes out of the gateway and is immediately excited)*

DOORMAN What's the matter?

GRISWALD *(jerking his head toward the fleeing boys)* Catch those boys! *(The DOORMAN lumbers up the street in pursuit GRISWALD takes a handkerchief from his breast pocket and presses it to his wrist Blood seeps through GRISWALD, self-controlled now, tries to quiet the sobbing PHILIP)* It's all right, son, it's all right! No, no, no! Now stop crying Let me have your handkerchief!

GIMPTY Are you hurt?

GRISWALD What do you think?

GIMPTY Can I help?

GRISWALD It's a little late for that now

PHILIP *(fishes out a crumpled handkerchief and hands it to his father)* Here

GRISWALD Haven't you a clean one?

PHILIP No

GIMPTY You can have mine

GRISWALD Never mind (To PHILIP, who puts his own handkerchief back) You should always carry two clean handkerchiefs. Put your hand in my pocket. You'll find one there. No, the other pocket. (PHILIP finds the handkerchief. The GOVERNESS comes down the sidewalk with a POLICEMAN.)

POLICEMAN What's the matter?

GRISWALD Plenty

GOVERNESS (sees the blood and shrieks) Oh! He's bleeding! (To PHILIP) *Qu'est ce qui passe, mon petit?*

PHILIP That boy stuck him with a knife!

GOVERNESS (to GRISWALD) *Mon Dieu!* Are you hurt, monsieur? (GRISWALD ignores her and tightens the bandage.)

POLICEMAN Is it deep?

GRISWALD Deep enough

POLICEMAN Better let me make a tourniquet

GRISWALD Never mind

POLICEMAN Who did it?

GRISWALD One of these hoodlums around here. I want that boy arrested.

POLICEMAN Sure. Do you know who he was?

GRISWALD. No

GOVERNESS Can I help you, monsieur?

GRISWALD Yes. Go up and call Dr. Mernam at once. I'm afraid of infection. (The DOORMAN returns, empty-handed, puffing, and mopping his brow. GRISWALD frowns.) Where is he?

DOORMAN (panting) Phew. I couldn't catch them.

GRISWALD (angry) You let them go?

DOORMAN I tried, sir. They were like flies in and out. Just when I thought I had one of them, he ran down the cellar. I went after him, but he got away.

GRISWALD Officer, I want you to find that boy and arrest him. Understand?

POLICEMAN (takes out a notebook and pencil) Well, that ain't gonna be so easy, you know.

GRISWALD Never mind. That's your job! It's pretty serious that a thing like this can happen on your beat in broad daylight.

POLICEMAN Well, I can't be every where at once.

GRISWALD Before he stabbed me, he and some others beat up my boy and stole his watch. You should have been around some of that time.

POLICEMAN (annoyed at his officiousness. Brusquely) Well, what's your name?

GRISWALD My name's Griswald. I live here. (Nods toward the East River Terrace.)

POLICEMAN What did the boy look like?

GRISWALD He was about so high
black hair oh, I don't know I
didn't notice Did you, son?

PHILIP One of them coughs

POLICEMAN Didn't you notice any-
thing else?

PHILIP No

GRISWALD Jeanne?

GOVERNESS Let me see

POLICEMAN How was he dressed?

GOVERNESS They'd been in swim-
ming here They were practically
naked and filthy And their lan-
guage was 'ornble

GRISWALD (*irritated*) He knows that,
he knows that! What were they like,
though? Didn't you see?

GOVERNESS It all happened so
quickly, I didn't have a chance to,
monsieur

PHILIP He hit me with a stick

POLICEMAN Hm!

GRISWALD (*suddenly a bit faint*)
These men can tell you better They
saw it Jeanne, will you please call
Dr Merriam right away? I'm feeling
a little sick

GOVERNESS *Out, monsieur! Come,*
Philippe! (She goes in, accompanied
by PHILIP)

GRISWALD I don't want to make any
trouble, officer, but I want that boy
caught and arrested Understand?

POLICEMAN I'll do the best I can
(*Exit* GRISWALD *The* POLICEMAN

mutters) I wonder who the hell that
guy thinks he is

DOORMAN (*impressively, rolling the*
sound on his tongue) Mr Griswald
(*CHARLES, the chauffeur, saunters*
down the sidewalk)

POLICEMAN What of it?

DOORMAN Don't you know? He's
just gone Griswald's brother

POLICEMAN (*his attitude changes*)
Oh!

DOORMAN (*to the CHAUFFEUR, who*
has reached the gate) Oh, I don't
think Mr Griswald'll be using the
car now He was just hurt

CHARLES Wha-a-at? What hap-
pened?

DOORMAN He was stabbed It's a long
story I'll tell you later

CHARLES (*concerned*) Well, will
you call him and see if he wants me?

DOORMAN (*starting off*) Yeah

POLICEMAN Hey, wait!

DOORMAN I'll be right out, officer
Mr Griswald may need him

POLICEMAN Oh, all right
(*DOORMAN and CHARLES go in*
through the gate)

CHARLES What happened?

DOORMAN These kids around here
have been raising an awful rumpus
all day, and just now one of them
(*Their voices die off*)

POLICEMAN (*to GIMPTY*) Did you
see the kids who did this?

GIMPTY. I didn't notice them

POLICEMAN You come around here often?

GIMPTY Yes

POLICEMAN Didn't you recognize any of 'em?

GIMPTY No

POLICEMAN Can you describe 'em?

GIMPTY Not very clearly

POLICEMAN (*annoyed*) Well, what were they like?

GIMPTY About so high dirty an' naked

POLICEMAN (*impatiently*) And they socked that young jalopee in the eye Yeah I got that much myself But that might be any kid in this neighborhood Anything else?

GIMPTY No

POLICEMAN (*slaps his book shut*) Why the hell didn't I learn a trade? (*He starts toward the gate* DRINA comes down the street and approaches GIMPTY She looks tired and bedraggled She has an ugly bruise on her forehead)

GIMPTY (*to DRINA*) Hey, what's the matter with your head?

DRINA (*looking at the POLICEMAN and raising her voice*) We were picketing the store, an' some lousy cop hit me

POLICEMAN (*wheels around, insulted*) What's that?

DRINA (*deliberately*). One a you lousy cops hit me

POLICEMAN You better watch your language or you'll get another clout!

DRINA Go on and try it!

GIMPTY (*urging discretion*) Sh!

POLICEMAN Listen! I'm in no mood to be tampered with I'm in no mood! Not by a lousy Red

DRINA (*quietly*) I ain't no Red

POLICEMAN (*thick-skulled*) Well you talk like one

DRINA Aw nuts!

POLICEMAN You were strikin', weren't you?

DRINA Sure Because I want a few bucks more a week so's I can live decent God knows I earn it!

POLICEMAN (*who has had enough*). Aw, go on home! (*He turns and goes in the gate, addressing someone*) Hey, Bill, I wanna see you (*Pause*)

DRINA (*to GIMPTY*) We were only picketing We got a right to picket They charged us They hit us right and left Three of the girls were hurt bad

GIMPTY I'll give you some advice about your brother

DRINA I was just lookin' for him Did you see him?

GIMPTY Tell him to keep away from here or he's in for a lot of trouble

DRINA (*sits down, exhausted, and sighs*) What's he done now?

GIMPTY Plenty

DRINA What?

GIMPTY Just tell him to keep away

DRINA Gosh, I don't know what to do with that boy! (*A passing boat hoots twice* DRINA *ponders her problem a moment*) There's a feller I know is always askin' me to marry him. Maybe I ought to do that, hm? For Tommy he's rich. What should I do?

GIMPTY (*disinterested, too absorbed in his own problem*) That's up to you

DRINA Most of the girls at the store are always talkin' about marryin' a rich guy. I used to laugh at 'em. (*She laughs now at herself*)

GIMPTY Maybe they're right

DRINA (*looks at him*) That doesn't sound like you

GIMPTY No? How do you know what goes on inside of me?

DRINA (*shakes her head and smiles sadly*) I know

GIMPTY (*curtly*) Smart girl!

DRINA (*very tender and soft* She *knows he's suffering*) What's the matter?

GIMPTY Nothing

DRINA I understand

GIMPTY You can't

DRINA Why can't I? (*Suddenly exasperated*) Sometimes for a boy as bright as you, with your education, you talk like a fool. Don't you think I got a heart too? Don't you think there are nights when I cry myself to sleep? Don't you think I know what it means to be lonely and scared and to want somebody? God, ain't I human? Am I so homely that I ain't got a right to

GIMPTY No, Drina! I think you're a swell girl. You are

DRINA (*turns away, annoyed at his patronage*) Oh, don't give me any of that taffy! You don't even know I'm alive!

GIMPTY Why do you say that?

DRINA What's the difference? It don't matter. Only I hate to see you butting your head against a stone wall. You're only going to hurt yourself.

GIMPTY What're you talking about?

DRINA You know. Oh, I think that lady's beautiful and I think she's nice.

GIMPTY (*angry*) Look! Will you be a good girl and mind your own business?

DRINA She's not for you!

GIMPTY Why not?
(*The POLICEMAN comes out of the East River Terrace, notebook and pencil in hand. He goes to GIMPTY.*)

POLICEMAN Well, I got something to work on, anyway. Do you know a kid named Tommy something around here?

(DRINA starts, but checks herself)

GIMPTY No

POLICEMAN They heard the others call him Tommy (*Jerks his head toward the gate*) You know what he's liable to do? With his pull? Have me broke, maybe The first thing I know, I'll be pounding a lousier post than this! Harlem, maybe Get a knife in my back (*Looks up from his notebook to DRINA*) Hey, you!

DRINA What?

POLICEMAN You live around here?

DRINA (*very docile, frightened*) Yes

POLICEMAN Know a kid named 'Tommy something?

DRINA No no, I don't

POLICEMAN (*studying his notes*) I'll catch him I'll skin him alive!

DRINA (*finally ventures*) What'd he do?

POLICEMAN Pulled a knife on some high muck-a-muck in there

DRINA No!

POLICEMAN Yeah Ah, it don't pay to be nice to these kids It just don't pay

DRINA Was the man hurt?

POLICEMAN Yeah It looks like a pretty deep cut Lord, he's fit to be tied! I never seen a guy so boined up! (*DRINA turns and goes up the street, restraining her impulse to run* The POLICEMAN jabbars on, complainingly) This is a rough enough precinct but Harlem?—There's a lousy

precinct! A pal of mine got killed there last year Left a wife and a couple a kids

GIMPTY Is that so?

POLICEMAN Yeah

GIMPTY Too bad! (*As the idea begins to take form*) Well maybe you can catch Baby-face Martin or one of those fellows, and grab off that forty-two-hundred-dollar reward

POLICEMAN Yeah

GIMPTY Then you could retire

POLICEMAN Yeah, you could do a lot on that

GIMPTY Yeah, I guess you could Say tell me something

POLICEMAN What?

GIMPTY Supposin' supposin' a fellow knew where that er Baby-face Martin is located How would he go about reporting him and making sure of not getting gypped out of the reward?

POLICEMAN Just phone police headquarters or the Department of Justice direct They'd be down here in two minutes (*He looks at GIMPTY and asks ironically*) Why? You don't know where he is, do you?

GIMPTY (*smiles wanly back at him*) Colorado, the newspapers say No, I was just wondenn'

POLICEMAN Well, whoever turns that guy in is taking an awful chance He's a killer

GIMPTY Well . you can't live forever

(A passing tug shrieks its warning signal And shrieks again **MARTIN** walks, cat-footed, down the street)

POLICEMAN That's right
(**GIMPTY** turns, sees **MARTIN**, and rises)

GIMPTY (to the **POLICEMAN**) Excuse me

POLICEMAN Sure
(**GIMPTY** crosses to the other side of the street, and walks away, pretending not to notice **MARTIN**)

MARTIN Hello, Gimpty! (**GIMPTY** accelerates his pace and hobbles off **MARTIN** sucks his teeth for a second, thinking Then he adopts an amiable smile and approaches the **POLICEMAN**) Kunda quiet today, ain' it, officer?

POLICEMAN Not with these kids around

MARTIN (jerks his head in **GIMPTY**'s direction) Dat's a nice feller Friend a mine
(**HUNK** has entered from up the street just after **GIMPTY**'s exit He is lighting a cigar, when he sees **MARTIN** in friendly conversation with the arch enemy He stands there, transfixed, match to cigar)

POLICEMAN I had quite a talk with him

MARTIN (fishing) What about?

POLICEMAN Oh about these kids here

MARTIN Zat all?

POLICEMAN Say, that's plenty! (He puts his notebook in his pocket) You don't happen to know a kid around here named Tommy something, do you?

MARTIN (shakes his head) Uh-uh!

POLICEMAN Well, I'll catch him all right! (He strides up the sidewalk. **MARTIN** watches him, then laughs The match burns **HUNK**'s fingers He drops it)

HUNK Jesus!

MARTIN (laughing) A pal a mine.

HUNK Dat's crazy

MARTIN Dey don' know me wid dis mug

HUNK (sighs This is too much for him Then he remembers his errand) Say, dat dame is heah

MARTIN Who?

HUNK Er Francey, or whatevah yuh call huh

MARTIN She is?

HUNK Yeah I got 'er waitin' on a corner (Puzzled) I dunno what yuh wanna bodder wid a cheap hustlah like dat fuh

MARTIN (sharply) Wha da yuh mean? Francey ain' no hustlah!

HUNK (skeptical) No?

MARTIN No

HUNK (smiles weakly). O K My mistake We all make mistakes, boss

Dat's what dey got rubbuhs on ee end a pencils faw (*Laughs feebly.*)

MARTIN Pretty cute, ain't cha? Maybe yuhr a mustake Maybe yuhr hiable tuh git rubbed out yuhself

HUNK (*frightened*) I'll git huh now (*He starts off A young girl comes down the street, an obvious whore of the lowest class, wearing her timeless profession defiantly A pert, pretty little face still showing traces of quality and something once sweet and fine Skin an unhealthy pallor, lips a smear of rouge Her mop of dyed red hair is lustreless, strawy, dead from too much alternate bleach and henna She carries herself loosely Droop-shouldered Voluptuous S-shaped posture There are no clothes under her cheap, faded green silk dress, cut so tight that it reveals the nipples of her full breasts, her navel the "V" of her crotch, the muscles of her buttocks She has obviously dressed hastily, carelessly, one stocking streaked with runs dribbles down at the ankle She accosts HUNK, impatiently*)

FRANCEY Hey, what ta hell's ee idear, keepin' me standin' on a corner all day? I'm busy I gotta git back tuh da house Yuh want Ida tuh break my face?
(MARTIN looks at her)

MARTIN Francey! Jesus, what's come over yuh?

FRANCEY (*turning sharply to MARTIN*) How do yew know my name? Who are yew? (*Impatiently*) Well, who th' hell (*Then she recognizes him, and gasps*) Fuh th' love a God! Marty!

MARTIN (*never taking his eyes off the girl*) Yeah Hunk scam!

(HUNK goes up the street, stops at the tenement stoop and lounges there, within ear shot)

FRANCEY (*eagerly*) How are yuh, Marty?

MARTIN Read duh papers!

FRANCEY Yuh did somethin' to yuh face

MARTIN Yeah Plastic, dey call it.

FRANCEY They said yuh wuz out aroun' Coloradah—th' noospapuhsl Gee, I'm glad to see yuh!
(MARTIN slips his arm around her waist and draws her tight to his body As his lips grope for hers, FRANCEY turns her face away MARTIN tries to pull her face around She cries furiously) No don' kiss me on a lips!

MARTIN (*releasing her, puzzled*) What? What's a matter? (*He can't believe this He frowns*) I ain't good enough for yuh?

FRANCEY (*quickly*) No It ain't dat. It ain't yew It's me I got a sore on my mouth Fuh yuhr own good, I don't want yuh to kiss me, dat's why

MARTIN I ain't nevuh fuhgot da way yew kiss

FRANCEY (*wistfully*) I ain't niethub (*She laughs*) Go on! You wit all yer fancy dames. Where do I come off?

MARTIN Dey don't mean nuttin'

FRANCEY Dat chorus goil what's 'er name?

MARTIN Nuttin' She ain't got nuttin' no guts, no fire But yew

been beinin' in my blood . evuh
since

FRANCEY An' yew been in mine
if yuh wanna know

MARTIN Remembuh dat foist night
on a roof?

FRANCEY Yeah, I remembuh
da sky was full a stars, an' I was full
a dreamy ideas Dat was me foist
time I was fourteen, goin' on fifteen

MARTIN Yeah It wuz mine too It
wuz terrific Hit me right wheah I
live like my back wuz meltin'
An I wuz so sca'd when yuh started
laffin' an' cryin', crazy like
(*They both laugh, enjoying the
memory, a little embarrassed by it*)

FRANCEY Yeah

MARTIN Gee, I nevuh wuz so sca'd
like 'at time

FRANCEY Me too

MARTIN (*draws her to him again,
more gently*) Come eah! Close to
me!

FRANCEY (*acquiescing*) Ony don'
kiss me on a lips!

MARTIN Closuh! (*They stand there
a moment, bodies close, passionate
MARTIN buries his face in her hair*)

FRANCEY (*eyes closed, whispers*)
Marty!

MARTIN Dose times unduh da
stairs

FRANCEY A couple a crazy kids we
were! We wuz gonna git married I
bought a ring at da five an' dime staw

MARTIN Yeah Ony we didn' have
money enough fuh de license Gee,
it seems like yestuddy We wuz talkin'
about it right heah

FRANCEY Yestuddy! It seems like a
million yeahs!

MARTIN (*as voices are heard coming
from the East River Terrace*) Wait!
(*They separate He draws his hat
over his eyes and turns away as a
young couple come out of the gate
and walk up the street*)

GIRL So many people standing
around What's all the excitement?
What's happened?

MAN The elevator man said someone
was stabbed

GIRL Really? Who was it, do you
know?

MAN Mr Griswald, I think he said
Twelfth floor

GIRL Oh! Yes? Did he say who did
it?

MAN He said one of the kids around
here somewhere

(*When they are well out of sight,
FRANCEY clutches MARTIN's arm*)

FRANCEY Marty, listen! Yuh got ta
take care a yuhself Yuh gotta go way
an' hide I don' want 'em to git yuh!
I don' wan' 'em to git yuh!

MARTIN Whatsa diffrence wheah I
go? Ey got thuh finger on me every-
wheah Ah, frig 'em

FRANCEY Dey won't reco'nize yuh
Dey won't! Even I didn't

MARTIN Yeah, but yuh can' change
ese, Francey Look! (*He holds up*

his fingers *The tips are yellow and scarred*) Tree times I boined 'em wid acid an' t'ings No good Dere are some t'ings yuh can't change But I'll tell yuh what I'll scam out a heah I'll scam if yew come wit me

FRANCEY Ah, what do yuh want me fer? A broken-down hoor

MARTIN Shut up!

FRANCEY I wouldn't be good fuh yuh

MARTIN I know what I want

FRANCEY *(laughs, crazily)* Yeah Dis is a swell pipe-dream I'm havin'! I'm Minnie de Moocher kickin' a gong aroun'

MARTIN I listen! I got de dough now, kid We kin do it now

FRANCEY But I'm sick, Marty! Don't yuh see? I'm sick!

MARTIN What's a matter wid yuh?

FRANCEY *(almost inaudibly)* What do yuh think?

(MARTIN looks at her for a long time He sees her The nostalgic dream is finished His lips begin to curl in disgust)

MARTIN Why didncha git a job?

FRANCEY Dey don't grow on trees!

MARTIN Why didncha starve foist?

FRANCEY Why didnchou?

(MARTIN makes no effort to conceal his growing disgust Turns away)

FRANCEY *(suddenly shouts, fiercely, at the top of her lungs)* Well, what ta hell did yuh expect?

MARTIN I don't know

(A passing tug shrieks hoarsely The echo floats back)

FRANCEY *(quietly, clutching at a hope)* Maybe if yuh got da dough yuh git a doctuh an' he fixes me up

MARTIN Nah Once at stuff gits in yuh nah! *(Again the tug shrieks and is answered by its echo He reaches into his inner breast pocket, extracts a fat roll of bills, peels off several and hands them to her)* Heah Buy yerself somethin'

FRANCEY *(her eyes suddenly glued to the money)* Baby! Dat's some roll yuh got Yuh cud choke a hoss wid dat

MARTIN *(thrusting it at her)* Heah!

FRANCEY *(takes the money)* Is it hot?

MARTIN Yeah Bettah be careful where yuh spend it

FRANCEY Sure

MARTIN An' keep yuh lips buttoned up!

FRANCEY I wouldn't tell on yuh, Marty Not if dey tied me ta wild hosses, I wouldn't

MARTIN Bettuh not

FRANCEY *(folds her money, still fascinated by the huge roll of bills in his hand Her voice takes on a peculiar whining, wheedling quality)* Honey!

MARTIN. Yeah?

FRANCEY Cud yuh spare another twenty bucks? I godda

MARTIN No!

FRANCEY Aw, come on, deane!

MARTIN No!

FRANCEY Don' be a tightwad!

MARTIN (*reaching the limit of his disgust*) What ta hell do yuh tink I am? Some guy yuh got up in yuh room? I'll (*He raises his hand, ready to slap her. Again the shriek of a tug, and the echo*)

FRANCEY (*quickly, frightened*) Nah, ferget it, Marty! I wuz just

MARTIN Awright! Awright! Now beat it!

FRANCEY O K, Marty (*She starts to go, pauses, turns back*) Fer old times' sakes, w'll yuh do me a favor? Please?

MARTIN (*shoves the money back into his pocket*) No!

FRANCEY Not dat

MARTIN What?

FRANCEY Will yuh kiss me? Heah? Ona cheek? Jus' fuh old times' sakes? Come on (*He hesitates. She comes close, presses her cheek against his lips. He pecks her cheek, and turns away, scowling. She laughs, a low bitter laugh, at his obvious disrelish*) Thanks! (*She goes up the street slowly, her purse swinging carelessly, her body swaying invitation, the tired march of her profession. The shriek of the tug is drawn out and distant now. The echo lingers.* MAR-

TIN *splits and wipes the kiss off his lips with a groan of distaste*)

HUNK (*comes down the sidewalk, slowly*) Well?

MARTIN Huh?

HUNK See?

MARTIN Yeah Yeah!

HUNK Twice in one day Deah yuh 1h! I toldja we shouldn' a come back But yuh wouldn' lissen a me Yuh nevah lissen a me

MARTIN Yeah

HUNK (*trying to console him*) I know how yuh feel, Marty Les go back to St Louis, huh? Now dat dame yuh had deah—Deedy Cook—Now dat wuz a broad Regaler Bet she's waitin fuh yuh wid welcome ona doormat

MARTIN Awright! Don' talk 'bout dames, Hunk, will yuh? Fuhget 'em All cats look alike inna dahk Fuhget 'em

(*A little girl comes out of the gate bouncing a rubber ball. MARTIN looks at her, thinks a moment, turns to watch her go up the street. He sucks his teeth a moment, thinking*)

HUNK Listen, Marty Let's gu outta heah Too many people know yuh heah Whaddaya say?

MARTIN Sh! I'm thinkin' (*Pause*)

HUNK Well, guess I'll go shoot e game a pillpool (*Starts to go up the street*)

MARTIN (*motions him back, turns to stare at the Terrace Apartments*)

Wait a minute. (HUNK returns)
Yuh know, Hunk (He shakes a
thumb at the Apartment) Der's a pile
a tin in ere

HUNK Yeah

MARTIN Didja see what dese kids did
heah today?

HUNK No

MARTIN Ey got one a dese rich little
squirts in a hallway, slapped him
around an' robbed his watch

HUNK So what?
(A man appears on the terrace,
watches them for a second, and then
slips away. Two men come down the
street talking casually, one of them
goes into the tenement, the other,
waiting for him, wanders over back
of the hopper and is hidden from
view.)

MARTIN (glances at them, lowers his
voice) Maybe we kin pull a snatch
kidnap one a dese babies

HUNK We're too hot Foolin' round
wid kids ain' our racket

MARTIN Scared?

HUNK No ony I

MARTIN Stop yuh yammerin'! Git a
hold a Whitey See wot he knows
about duh mugs in heah! (HUNK
hesitates) Come on, Hunk, git goin'!

HUNK O K Yuh duh boss! (He goes
reluctantly)
(The tap of GIMPTY's cane on the
sidewalk is heard approaching, its
rhythmic click ominous GIMPTY ap-
pears, tight-lipped, pale, grim MAR-
TIN smiles out of one corner of his

lips, and throws him a conciliatory
greeting)

MARTIN Hello, Gimpty!
(GIMPTY turns away without answer-
ing MARTIN, amused, laughs He is
suddenly in a good mood The man
who spied on him from the terrace
appears in the gateway and catches
GIMPTY's eye GIMPTY points his cane
at MARTIN The good mood passes
MARTIN's eyebrows pull together in
one puzzled line)

MARTIN What's eatin' yuh, wise
guy?
(The man behind the gate draws a
revolver, comes quickly up behind
MARTIN and digs the gun in his back)

G MAN Get em up, Martin! The De-
partment of Justice wants you!

MARTIN What ta hell! (Tries
to turn, but the revolver prods him
back)

G MAN Come on, get' em up!

MARTIN (hands up) I ain't Martin
My name's Johnson Wanna see my
license? (He slides his hand into his
breast pocket)

G MAN If you're smart, you'll behave
yourself!

MARTIN (wheels around, draws his
gun, and fires in one motion) No,
yuh don't (The G MAN drops his
gun, crumples onto the sidewalk
holding his belly and kicking MAR-
TIN turns to face GIMPTY, who has
backed away to the hopper MARTIN,
his face black and contorted, aims at
GIMPTY) So yuh ratted, yuh
(From behind the hopper and the
tenement doorway guns explode)

Two other G MEN appear and descend on MARTIN, firing as they come MARTIN groans, wheels and falls, his face in the gutter, his fingers clawing the sidewalk One of the G MEN goes to aid his wounded comrade The other G MAN stands over MARTIN's body, pumping bullet after bullet into him, literally nailing him to the ground The G MAN kicks him to make sure he's dead No twitch! MARTIN lies there flat The G MAN takes out a handkerchief, picks up MARTIN's gun gingerly, wraps it in the handkerchief, puts it in his pocket)

SECOND G MAN Where 'd he get you, Bob? Come on, sit up here! (Helps him to sit against the coping FIRST G MAN presses his hand in agony to his wound From the street there is a rising babble of voices Tenement windows are thrown up, heads thrust out, the curious crowd to the edge of the terrace, come to the gate, run down the street, collect in small groups, discussing the macabre scene in excited, hushed murmur A LADY comes out of the gate, sees the dead man, screams hysterically, and is helped off by the DOORMAN The POLICEMAN comes tearing down the street, revolver drawn He forces his way through the crowd)

POLICEMAN Out a my way! Look out! (To the THIRD G MAN) What's this?

THIRD G MAN (taking out a badge in a leather case from inside his coat pocket and holding it up) It's all right, officer Department of Justice! (Replaces the badge)

POLICEMAN What happened? Who's this guy?

THIRD G MAN Baby-face Martin

POLICEMAN Is that him?

THIRD G MAN Yep

POLICEMAN Gese, I was talkin' to him a couple a minutes ago

SECOND G MAN Get an ambulance, quick! Will you?

POLICEMAN (crosses to the police box, opens it) Box 10 Mulligan Send ambulance! Make all notifications! Baby-face Martin was just shot by Federal men He winged one of 'em I don't know yeah here Gese, I was talking to him myself a few minutes ago Hell Sarge, I couldn't recognize him His face is all made over (He hangs up The shrill siren of a radio car mounts to a crescendo, mingles with the screech of brakes, and is suddenly silent Two more policemen dash on, forcing their path through the crowd They are followed by SPIT, wearing a single roller skate He edges his way to the front of the crowd)

SECOND POLICEMAN Hi, Mulligan What have yuh got here?

MULLIGAN Baby-face Martin!

THIRD POLICEMAN Did you git him?

MULLIGAN No such luck The Federal men got him He winged one of them (Gestures toward the wounded G MAN)

SECOND POLICEMAN Did you notify the house?

MULLIGAN Yeah I gave 'em everything Lend us a hand, will yuh Git rid of this crowd (MULLIGAN stands by MARTIN's body, writing in a notebook The other POLICEMEN

push back the crowd SPIT *slips through, and looks at the dead man with scared curiosity*)

SECOND POLICEMAN (*pushing the crowd*) Break it up! This is no circus Come on, break it up!

GIRL IN THE CROWD Don't push me!

SECOND POLICEMAN Well, go on home! Go on, break it up!

SECOND G MAN (*to the wounded agent*) How you feelin', Bob?

FIRST G MAN Lousy

SECOND G MAN You'll be O K

FIRST G MAN I don't know I don't know! I should've plugged him right away in the back You don't give a snake like that a break Anyway, we got him! That's something!

SECOND G MAN Sure you did, Bob You'll get cited for this

FIRST G MAN That's dandy! That's just dandy! Give the medal to my old lady for the kids to play with an' remember they once had an old man who was a hero!

THIRD G MAN Aw, cut it, Bob You'll be O K Don't talk like that!

DOORMAN (*pushing through the crowd*) Officer! Officer!

MULLIGAN Get outa here! You with the rest of them Come on, get back!

DOORMAN Officer, this is important! That's one of the boys there, that one! He's one of the gang!

MULLIGAN What boy? What the hell are you talkin' about?

DOORMAN The one who stabbed Mr Griswald

MULLIGAN What? Oh, where?

DOORMAN (*pointing*) That one there! He's one of the gang

MULLIGAN Are you sure?

DOORMAN Yes yes I'll swear to it!

MULLIGAN Come here! Hey you! (*Runs over to SPIT, grabs his arm* The murmur of the crowd rises)

SPIT Lemme go! I didn' do nuttin' Lemme go!

SECOND POLICEMAN What is this kid got to do with it?

MULLIGAN That's somethin' else (*The clang of an approaching ambulance comes to a sudden halt Enter, pushing their way down the street, an INTERNE carrying a doctor's bag, followed by an AMBULANCE MAN carrying a folded stretcher, which encloses a pillow and a rolled blanket The murmur of the crowd hushes*)

INTERNE Hello, Mulligan

MULLIGAN Hello, doc (*To SECOND POLICEMAN*) Hold this kid a minute

(*SECOND POLICEMAN grabs SPIT's arm and drags him back to the crowd on the sidewalk*)

INTERNE What's up? (*He comes down to the body*)

MULLIGAN Just got Baby-face Martin!

(The murmur rises again as the news is spread.)

INTERNE You did? (He glances at the body.) He won't need me!

SECOND G MAN Hey, doc, look at this man! (The INTERNE kneels to the wounded man, examines his wound, sponges it, places a pad over it) It's not bad, is it, doc?

INTERNE (cheerfully) Not very bad, but we'd better rush him off to the hospital. Here, somebody help get him on the stretcher.

(The AMBULANCE MAN opens the stretcher, places the pillow at the head. SECOND G MAN and MULLIGAN lift the wounded G MAN carefully and lay him on the stretcher with words of encouragement. The AMBULANCE MAN untolls the blanket over him. SECOND G MAN and the AMBULANCE DRIVER carry the wounded man up the sidewalk calling "Gangway". The THIRD G MAN accompanies them, holding the wounded man's hand and talking to him. The crowd opens a path, and stare, their murmur silenced for a moment.)

MULLIGAN (pointing to BABY-FACE) Want to look at this guy, doc?

INTERNE (kneels by the body, rips open the coat and vest, cursorily inspects the wounds, rolls back the eyelid, applies a stethoscope to the heart) Phew! They certainly did a job on him! Nothing left to look at but chopped meat. God, they didn't leave enough of him for a good p.m. (Rises, takes pad and pencil from his pocket, glances at MULLIGAN's shield, writes) Mulligan 10417

19th Precinct Have you got his pedigree?

MULLIGAN (reading from his own notebook) Joe Martin 28 White

U S 5 ft, 9 in 170 lbs Unmarried Occupation (Shrugs his shoulders)

INTERNE All right Dr. Flint. Mark him D O A!

MULLIGAN (writing) Dead on arrival

(Enter, pushing their way through the crowd, the MEDICAL EXAMINER, followed by the POLICE PHOTOGRAPHER. The PHOTOGRAPHER opens his camera, adjusts it, and photographs the body from several angles.)

INTERNE (as the EXAMINER approaches) Hello, doc!

EXAMINER Hello, Doctor. So they finally got him, did they?

INTERNE Yes, they sure did.

EXAMINER It's about time. What have you got on him?

INTERNE Twelve gunshot wounds. Five belly, four chest, three head. (Picks up his bag and goes. The EXAMINER inspects the body.)

MULLIGAN (to the DOORMAN) Hey, find something to cover this up with. (The DOORMAN nods and disappears through the gateway. MULLIGAN turns to the THIRD POLICEMAN, who is still holding back the crowd.) Hey, Tom! Stand by while I go through this bum! (He kneels, and goes through MARTIN's pockets, handing his findings to the THIRD POLICEMAN who jots them down in his notebook. MULLIGAN takes a ring off MARTIN's finger) Diamond ring. Look at that rock! (He hands it to the THIRD POLICEMAN who pockets it, and

makes a note MULLIGAN *extracts MARTIN's wad of bills*) And this roll of bills! What a pile! You count it!

EXAMINER Through with him, boys?

MULLIGAN *(rising)* Yeah

PHOTOGRAPHER One second! *(Takes a last photograph)*

EXAMINER Well, as soon as the wagon comes, send him down to the morgue. I'll look him over in the morning. Mulligan, you report to me there first thing in the morning, too.

MULLIGAN Yes, sir
(The EXAMINER goes. The PHOTOGRAPHER folds his camera and follows.)

WOMAN IN THE CROWD *(to the SECOND POLICEMAN, who is holding SPIT)* Officer! What did this boy have to do with it? Why are you holding him?

SECOND POLICEMAN Never mind. Stand back!

SPIT Lemme go! I didn't do nuttin'! Whadda yuh want?

MULLIGAN *(goes to SPIT)* You're one of the gang who beat up a boy here today and stabbed his father, ain't you?

SPIT No, I vain't. I didn't 'ave nuttn tuh do wid it. It wuz a kid named Tommy McGrath.

(The murmur of the crowd fades as they all listen.)

MULLIGAN Tommy McGrath! Where does he live?

SPIT On Foist Avenoo between Fifty-toid and Fifty-fawt.

MULLIGAN Sure?

SPIT Yeah.

MULLIGAN *(to the SECOND POLICEMAN)* Take this kid around there, will yuh? Get ahold a Tommy McGrath. He's wanted for stabbin some guy. I got to wait for the morgue wagon.

SECOND POLICEMAN O K. *(Drags SPIT through the crowd)* Come on! You show us where he lives and we'll let you go. *(As they go off, the murmur of the crowd rises again. The THIRD G MAN crosses to GIMPITY, who is leaning against the hopper, white and shaking. The DOORMAN comes out with an old discarded coat, the gold braid raveled and rusty, the cloth dirty and oil-stained. MULLIGAN takes it from him.)*

THIRD G MAN *(to GIMPITY)* Good work, Mac. Come over to the office and pick up your check. *(He makes his way up the street. MULLIGAN throws the coat over MARTIN's body. The murmur of the crowd rises high. A boat horn in the river bellows hoarsely and dies away.)*

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

SCENE—*The same That night A very dark night From the dock the sounds of a gay party, music, babble, laughter GIMPTY, a bent silhouette, sits on the coping leaning against the terrace wall There's a lamp shining up the street The lights from the tenement windows are faint and yellow and glum The lanterns on the gateposts, one red, one green, are lit and look very decorative There's a blaze of fire crackling out of an old iron ash-can in the center of the street The BOYS hover over it, roasting potatoes skewered on long sticks Their impish faces gleam red one minute and are wiped by shadows the next as they lean over the flames*

ANGEL (*gesturing wildly*) All uv a sudden da shots come
bing bam biff

T B (*superior*) I hoid da shots foist
I wuz jus walkin' up

ANGEL (*angrily*) Yuh di'not

T B I did so

ANGEL Yuh tought it wuz a tivitin' machine, yuh said

T B I di'not

ANGEL (*tops him*) Yuh did so

T B (*tops him*) I di'not

ANGEL (*tops him*) Yuh did so

T B (*tops him*) Ah, yuh mudduh's chooch!

ANGEL (*tops him*) Yeah, yuh fad-duh's doop!

T B (*crescendo*) Fongoola!

(DIPPY runs down the street waving two potatoes)

DIPPY Hey, guys, I swiped two maw mickeys Look!

ANGEL Boy, 'at's good!

SPIT O K Put 'em in

DIPPY Wheah's Tommy?

SPIT Put 'em in!

DIPPY Dis big one's mine, remem-buh!

SPIT Put 'em in, I said!

DIPPY Don' fugit, dis big one's mine!

SPIT Shat ap!

DIPPY Yeah yew yew shat ap!

SPIT Wha-a-at?

DIPPY (*cowed, moves away from SPIT*) Wheah's Tommy?

ANGEL I dunno He didn' show up yet

T B (*reflectively, referring to MARTIN*) Da papuhs said dey found twenty gran' in 'is pockets

ANGEL Twenty G's Boy, 'at's a lot a dough!

SPIT Boy, he must a bin a putty smaht guy

T B Baby-face? Sure! He wuz a tops Public enemy numbuh one Boy, he had guts He wasn' a scared a no-body Boy, he could knock 'em all off like dat like any'ting! Boy, like nuttn!

(DIPPY takes a stick from the can and holds it against his shoulder, pointed at ANGEL, maneuvering it as if it were a machine gun)

DIPPY (*makes a rapid, staccato bleating sound*) Ah-ah-ah-ah! Look, I godda machine gun! Ah-ah-ah-ah!

ANGEL (*pointing his kazoo at DIPPY*) Bang Bang!

DIPPY (*sore*) Nah, yuh can't do dat Yuh'r dead I shot yuh foist

ANGEL (*ignores that salient point, raises the kazoo again, takes dead aim at DIPPY*) Bang!

DIPPY (*lets loose with his improvised machine gun*) Ah-ah-ah-ah! Deah Now I gotcha! Now yuh dead!

ANGEL Bang!

DIPPY (*disgusted*) Aw-w-w! (*He throws the stick into the fire and turns away*)

T B Gese what I could do wid twenty G's!

ANGEL What?

SPIT Snot!

T B Yeah, I bet I could buy a boat like dat, huh? (*He points off toward the dock*)

ANGEL Look! Dey got lights an' flags an' music!

SPIT Dey got some hot party on, hey guys?

DIPPY Look! Look! Dey're dancin'! (*Cavorts about with an imaginary partner, making ribald gestures and singing*) Yuh're da top, yuh're da coliseum Hey! I'm dancin'! Look, felluhs! Look on me! I'm dancin'! Look on me! (*He whirls around and looks at them for approval*)

T B (*sour faced*) Sit down! Yew stunk!

(DIPPY stops grinning and dancing simultaneously He sits down, squelched)

ANGEL Twenty grand!

SPIT Yeah so what's it got 'im?

ANGEL Yeah Yuh see duh pitchuh uv 'is broad inna papuhs? Deedv Cook aw sump'm

T B Boy, some nice nooky, huh?

SPIT Boy, she's got some contrac's now! I heah she's gonna do a bubble dance in a boilesque, I t'ink

ANGEL Yeah My fadduh took one look at huh pitchuh So 'ee said 'ee'd let 'em shoot 'im too, fuh half an hour wid a fancy floozy like dat So my mudduh gits mad So she sez dey wouldn't haf tuh shoot cha Haf an hour wid at cockamamee yuh'd be dead! (*They all laugh*) So she spills

some boilin' watuh on 'im So 'ee yells
like a bastid an' runs outta da house
mad

(MILTY comes down the sidewalk,
breathless with excitement)

MILTY Hey, felluhs, yuh know
what?

ANGEL What?

SPIT Snot!

MILTY Balls tuh yew!

SPIT Ah, I'll mobilize yuh!

MILTY Yuh know what, guys? Duh
cops ah wise tuh Tommy

ANGEL Gese!

T B No kid! No kid!

SPIT Aw, bushwah!

MILTY No bushwah! Deah' lookin'
fuh 'im He tole me hisself (To
SPIT) Fot smelleh! Dey went up tuh
his house Some guy snitched

T B No kid!

SPIT Did dey git 'im?

MILTY Nah Tommy's too wise fuh
dem Dey come in tru de daw He
goes out tru de fire-escape, down a
yahrd, oveh de fence, tru de celleh,
up de stayuhs, out dee udduh street

SPIT Wheah's he now?

MILTY He's hidin' out

SPIT Wheah?

MILTY Wheah duh yuh tink,
wheah? Wheah dey don' ketch 'im,
dat's wheah

SPIT Ah, dey'll ketch 'im

MILTY Dey don' ketch Tommy so
quick

SPIT (nervously, looking into the
fire) How're de mickeys comin'?

T B Gese, I bet a dollah dey sen' 'im
tuh rifawm school

SPIT Sure Dat's what dey do

DIPPY Yeah, dat's what Ain' it,
T B?

T B Yeah Dey sent me tuh rifawm
school fuh jus' swipin' a bunch a
bananas An' 'ey wuz all rotten too,
most a dem

MILTY I pity duh guy who snitched
Tommy's layin' fuh him, awright

DIPPY Does 'ee know who?

SPIT (trying to change the subject)
Hcy, guys, duh mickeys ah awmost
done!

ANGEL (fishing out his potato and
poking it with his kazoo) Nah, not
yet Look, dis one's hard inside

DIPPY reaches to feel ANGEL's
mickey) Yeah Like a rock Ouch!
Dat's hot! (Licks his fingers)

ANGEL (dipping the mickey back
into the embers) Gese, poor Tom-
my! If dey ketch 'im, he don' git no
maw mickeys like dis fer a long time

DIPPY Dey git mickeys in rifawm
school, don' dey?

T B Slop dey git, slop unless
dey git some dough tuh smeah da
jailies wid

SPIT Aw, shat ap! All a time yuh shoot yuh mout' off about rifawm school like yew wuz 'ee any one who evuh went.

DIPPY Yeah Yew wuz ony deah six mont's

ANGEL Tom'll git two yeahs

DIPPY T'ree, maybe, I bet

MILTY Gese, dat's lousy

SPIT Ah, shat ap, will yuh?

T B Yeah, nevuh mind Yuh loin a barrel a good tings in rifawm school (*The DOORMAN comes out of the gate, exasperated*)

DOORMAN Now I'm not going to tell you again!
(**SPIT**, **T B** and **ANGEL** speak simultaneously)

SPIT Ah, go frng!

T B Deah're awmost done

ANGEL Jus' a li'l while

DOORMAN No! Get away from here all of you right now!

GIMPTY (*approaches the DOORMAN and addresses him in a voice tight and hoarse, hardly recognizable*) Did you give her my note?

DOORMAN Yes She said she'd be out in a moment

GIMPTY Thanks (*He retires to sit again in the shadows*)

DOORMAN If you kuds don't beat it, I'm going to call a cop! (*Turns to the gate*)

SPIT Aw, hold yuh hawses!

DOORMAN (*wheels about, threateningly*) Wha-a-at?

SPIT (*scared*) Nuttn

(*A LADY in evening gown and a MAN in tuxedo come down the street, talking quietly The WOMAN laughs As they reach the gate, the DOORMAN touches his hat*)

DOORMAN Good evening

MAN AND WOMAN Good evening
(*The DOORMAN follows them through the gateway*)

SPIT (*when the DOORMAN is well out of earshot*), Ah, yuh louse, I'll mobilize yuh!
(*The boys all roar*)

ANGEL Hey, de fire's dyin' down

T B Yeah, we need maw wood

SPIT Let's scout aroun' an' soich out some maw wood I'll stay heah an' guard de mickeys

T B Me too

SPIT Yew, too, balls!

T B What's a mattuh wit me?

SPIT What's a mattuh wit yew? Yew stink on ice, 'at's what's a mattuh wit' yew!

T B Yeah, well, yew ain' no lily a da valley

SPIT Go on now, or yuh git dis mickey . red hot up yuh bunny!

T B Yeah? (*He begins to cough*)

SPIT Yeah! Wanna make sumpm otuv it?

T B If it wasn't fuh my T B

SPIT Ah, dat's a gag Any time yuh put it straight up tuh 'im, he goes
(Imitates the cough) My T B Balls!

T B Oh, yeah? Look, smart guy!
(He has been holding his hand to his lips He coughs again, spits, opens his hand, holds it out and displays a bloody clot in the palm Proudly)
Blood! (The boys gasp)

ANGEL Wow!

T B Smart guy!

SPIT Ah, I could do dat Yuh suck yuh mout'!

DIPPY (sucks his mouth audibly, spits into his hand) I can't I can't How do yuh do it?
(DRINA comes down the street, sees the boys and hurries to them)

MILTY Hello, Drina

DRINA Did you see Tommy? (There is a tired, desperate quality in her tone)

MILTY No

DRINA (to DIPPY) Did you?

DIPPY Nope

DRINA Did anybody see him? He hasn't been home at all

MILTY No Nobody saw 'im, Drina

DRINA (tired, very tired) Thanks Thanks, Milty (She notices GIMPTY and approaches him)

ANGEL (in a whisper) Whyn't yuh tell huh?

MILTY (also whispering) No Tommy said no

SPIT (aloud) Ah, balonee!

MILTY (whispers) Sh! Shat ap!

SPIT (deliberately loud) Who fuh! I'll give yuh yuh lumps in a minute

DRINA (to GIMPTY) Pete, did you see Tommy?

GIMPTY What?

DRINA My brother? Have you seen him at all?

GIMPTY Oh! No

DRINA Gee, he hasn't showed up yet The cops are looking for him I'm scared to death

GIMPTY I'm sorry

SPIT Hey, Drina! Milty knows, but he won't tell!

DRINA (turns quickly) Does he?

MILTY No

SPIT He does

MILTY (quietly to SPIT) Ah, yuh louse! (Aloud to DRINA) I do not!

SPIT (to MILTY) I'll mobilize yuh! (To DRINA) He does so
(DRINA takes MILTY by both shoulders and shakes him)

DRINA Milty, please tell me if you know please! I'm half crazy

MILTY Tommy said not tuh tell

DRINA (pleading) But I wouldn't hurt him You know that It's for his

good I've got to talk to him I've got to find out what we're gonna do
(Pause) Milty, you've gotta tell me please!

MILTY (reluctantly) Aw right!
Come on .

DRINA (as they go up the street)
How is he? Is he all right? Is he hurt or anything?

MILTY Nah!

DRINA Why didn't he come home?

MILTY Don' worry, Drina Dey won' catch 'im
(They're out of sight and the voices fade off)

SPIT Hey, Angel You stay heah wid me Youse guys git some wood Go on!

DIPPY O K Watch my mickey

T B Mine too
(DIPPY and T B exit up the sidewalk)

DIPPY Me, I'm goin' ovuh on Toid Avenoo

T B I'm goin' ovuh tuh Schultzie's

DIPPY Naw, whyn't cha go ovuh on Second Avenoo?
(Their voices fade away)

SPIT Hey, Angel, yew stay heah an' guard dose mickeys

ANGEL Wheah yuh goin'?

SPIT I'm gonna trail Milty an' fin' out wheah Tommy is

ANGEL What faw!

SPIT None a yuh beeswax! (He lopes up the street ANGEL watches him for a while, puzzled, then fishes his kazoo from a pocket, relaxes by the fireside, and hums into the instrument A shadow detaches itself from the hopper and creeps stealthily toward ANGEL It whispers "Psst! Hey! Angel!" ANGEL wheels around, startled)

ANGEL Tommy! Gesel

TOMMY (his face glowing red as he leans over the fire toward ANGEL) Sh! Shat ap! (In a hoarse whisper) Wheah ah da guys?
(They both talk in whispers)

ANGEL Dey went tuh look fuh wood

TOMMY What?

ANGEL Fuh wood Maw wood Milty jus' took yuh sistuh .

TOMMY Is Spit wit de guys?

ANGEL Yeah

TOMMY O K

ANGEL Milty jus' took yuh sistuh tuh yer hideout

TOMMY He did? De louse!

ANGEL Whatcha gonna do, Tommy?

TOMMY Run away so de bulls don' git me

ANGEL (impressed), Gesel

TOMMY (quietly) But foist I'm gonna ketch de guy who snatched Do yuh know who it wuz?

ANGEL Me? No

TOMMY (*flaring*) Don' lie tuh me
I'll kill yuh!

ANGEL Yew know me, Tommy

TOMMY O K I tink I'm wise tuh
who done it

ANGEL. Who?

TOMMY Spit

ANGEL Yuh tink so?

TOMMY Yeah

ANGEL Gese!

TOMMY Now I'm gonna hide, see?
Right back a deah (*Points up be-
hind the hopper*) If yuh let on I'm
heah (*Ominously*) I'll put yuh
teet' down yuh throat!

ANGEL Aw, Tommy, yuh know me
. yuh know me!

TOMMY O K Den do like I tell yuh
When Spit comes back, yew tell 'im
like dis Duh guy I stabbed wuz
down heah lookin' fuh Spit tuh giv-
vim five bucks fuh smitchin' on who
done it Yuh got dat straight?

ANGEL Duh guy what he got stabbed
wuz down heah lookin' fuh Spit
tuh givvim five bucks fuh smitch-
in' on who done it

TOMMY Right

ANGEL O K

TOMMY An' rememba yew let
on I'm heah, I'll

ANGEL Aw, Tommy, yew know me

TOMMY Aw right Jus' do like I tole
yuh

ANGEL Whadda yuh gonna do tuh
Spit if 'ee done it? (*TOMMY takes a
knife from his pocket, and nips open
the blade The firelight runs along
the blade It looks bright and sharp
and hard TOMMY grimly draws it
diagonally across his cheek ANGEL
grunts*) Mark a de squealuh?

TOMMY (*snaps the blade home and
pockets the knife*) Right

ANGEL Gese!

TOMMY Now, go on playin' yuh ka-
zoo like nuttn happened like I
wuzn't heah
(*Footsteps and voices from the gate
TOMMY ducks and melts into the
shadows of the hopper ANGEL plays
his kazoo a bit ostentatiously The
DOORMAN opens the gate KAY ap-
pears in a shimmering evening gown,
lovely and scented*)

GIMPTY (*his voice dull and tired*).
Hello, Kay!

KAY Hello, Pete! (*GIMPTY looks past
KAY at the DOORMAN*) Yes?

DOORMAN Ma'am?

KAY Anything you want?

DOORMAN Oh no no, ma'am Ex-
cuse me (*Exit*)

GIMPTY I sent you a note this after
noon Did you get it?

KAY Yes I was out I didn't get back
till late I'm so sorry, Pete Forgive
me

GIMPTY Forget it!
(*Two couples in evening clothes
come down the street They are all
hectic, gay, and a trifle drunk They*

greet KAY merrily She laughs and jests with them, tells them she'll join them shortly, and in the gate they go Not, however, without one or two backward glances at GIMPTY Their chatter, off, ends in a burst of laughter that fades away KAY turns to GIMPTY)

KAY What a brawl that's turning into!

GIMPTY Yeah It seems like quite a party

KAY Yes, it is

GIMPTY *(after a pause, in a voice so low, it can scarcely be heard)* Kay did you hear what happened here this afternoon?

KAY What do you ?

GIMPTY The shooting

KAY *(making talk Evading)* Oh, yes And we just missed it It must have been exciting I'm

GIMPTY I didn't miss it

KAY No? Oh, tell me was it very ?

GIMPTY *(begins to give way to the terror and remorse pent up in him)* It was pretty horrible

KAY Oh of course

GIMPTY Horrible!

KAY *(realizing by his tone that something dreadful lies in all this, she becomes very tender and soothing)* Pete, give me your hand Come here *(She leads him to the edge of the wharf)* Sit down. Now, what happened?

GIMPTY. I'd rather not talk about it for a minute

KAY If it upsets you, let's not talk about it at all

GIMPTY Yes, I've got to . but not for a minute

KAY All right
(Underneath them, the river splashes against the bulwark Off, on the yacht, the band is playing a soft, sentimental melody The chatter and the laughter from the party float faintly over the water They sit there for a long time just staring across the river, at its lights, at the factories and signs on the opposite shore, at the bridge with its glittering loops, at the string of ghostly barges silently moving across the river For a long time Then she speaks, quietly)

KAY I love the river at night
It's beautiful and a bit frightening

GIMPTY *(stares down at the black water swirling under him He begins to talk, faster and faster, trying to push back into his unconscious the terror that haunts him, to forget that afternoon if only for a few seconds)* It reminds me of something What is it? Oh, yeah when I was a kid In the spring the sudden sun showers used to flood the gutters. The other kids used to race boats down the street Little boats straws, matches, lollipop-sticks I couldn't run after them, so I guarded the sewer and caught the boats to keep them from tumbling in Near the sewer sometimes, I remember . a whirlpool would form Dirt and oil from the street would break into rainbow colors indescr-

(*For a moment he does escape*)
 Beautiful, I think a marvel of
 color out of dirty water I can't take
 my eyes off it And suddenly a boat
 in danger (*The terror in him rises
 again*) I try to stop it Too late!
 It shoots into the black hole of the
 sewer I used to dream about falling
 into it myself The river reminds me
 of that Death must be like this
 like the river at night (*There
 is no comfort in her big enough for
 his needs They sit in brooding si-
 lence, which is finally interrupted by
 the DOORMAN's voice, off*)

DOORMAN Miss Mitchell came out
 here only a moment ago Yes, there
 she is now
 (*The DOORMAN and a SAILOR come
 out of the gate*)

SAILOR Miss Mitchell?

KAY Yes?

SAILOR Mr Hilton says we're ready
 to cast off We're waiting for you,
 ma'am

KAY Tell him I'll be there in a min-
 ute

SAILOR Yes'm
 (*Exit SAILOR*)

DOORMAN (*turns to ANGEL, who is
 still hovering over the fire*) Why
 don't you kids beat it?

ANGEL Aw-w!

DOORMAN All right! I'll fix you! (*He
 strides off up the street*)

GIMPTY (*desperately*) Kay, there's
 t'ill time You don't have to go

KAY (*finality in her quiet voice*) I'm
 afraid I do

GIMPTY Listen I knew where
 Martin was And I told the police

KAY You? How did you recognize
 him?

GIMPTY I used to know him when I
 was a kid

KAY Oh!

GIMPTY I know it was a stunkin'
 thing to do

KAY No It had to be done

GIMPTY There was a reward

KAY Yes, I know I read about it
 That's a break for you, Pete You can
 help your mother now And you can
 live decently

GIMPTY How about you?

KAY This isn't the miracle we were
 looking for

GIMPTY (*after a long pause*) No I
 guess you're right

KAY How long would it last us? Per-
 haps a year, then what? I've been
 through all that I couldn't go
 through it again

GIMPTY I guess it's asking too much

KAY (*softly, trying to make him see
 the picture realistically, reasonably*)
 It's not all selfishness, Pete I'm
 thinking of you too I could do this
 I could go and live with you and be
 happy— (*And she means it*) —and
 then when poverty comes and we
 begin to torture each other, what
 would happen? I'd leave you and go
 back to Jack He needs me too, you
 see I'm pretty certain of him But

what would become of you then?
That sounds pretty butchy, I suppose

GIMPTY No no, it's quite right
I didn't see things as clearly as you
did It's just that I've been such
a dope

KAY No! It's just that we can't have
everything ever (She rises)

GIMPTY Of course

KAY Good-bye, darling

GIMPTY (rises) Good-bye, Kay Have
a pleasant trip

KAY (one sob escaping her) Oh,
Pete, forgive me if I've hurt you
Please forgive me!

GIMPTY Don't be foolish You
haven't hurt me It's funny, but you
know, I never honestly expected any-
thing I didn't It was really just a
whimsy I played on myself

KAY Pete

GIMPTY Yes?

KAY Will you stay here and wave
good-bye to me when the boat goes?

GIMPTY Naturally I expected to

KAY Thanks (She kisses him) Take
care of yourself! (She goes quickly
GIMPTY follows her to the gate, stand-
ing there, peering through the bars,
catching a last glimpse of her SPIT
trots down the street)

SPIT He wuzn't deah

ANGEL No?

SPIT Nah Multy's a lot of bushwah.
I tole yuh (He looks at the fire Spits
into it ANGEL glances backward at
the shadows under the hopper)

ANGEL Hey, Spit!

SPIT What?

ANGEL Dey wuz a guy heah (T B
appears, dragging an egg crate)

T B Look what I got! Whew! Boy,
dat'll go up like wildfire!

SPIT Babee! Dat's good!

ANGEL Yeah! Dat's swell!
(They smash up the crate by jump-
ing on it Then they tear off the slats
and break them across the curb The
noise of the crashing and splintering
excites them They laugh and
chatter DIPPY enters, puffing and
grunting, dragging an old discarded
automobile seat by a rope)

DIPPY (proud of his contribution)
Hey, yuh t'ink dis'll boin? I t'ink
it'll boin, don' chew? Boy, like a house
afire I bet

ANGEL Nah, dat'll stink up da place

DIPPY (disappointed) Aw, Gese, I
dragged it a mile I dragged it fuh five
blocks It wuz way ovuh by Toid
Avenoo

(The boys throw some of the wood
into the fire It flares up with a great
crackling Tongues of flame shoot up
out of the can The band on the boat
plays, "Anchors Aweigh!" There is
much laughter and shouting of "Bon
Voyage!" "Have a pleasant trip," etc
from the party who have disembarked
The bells and the whistles
of the boat blow, the engines throb,
and the propellers churn the water.

GIMPTY *stands strained and tense, looking off, through the gate*)

R B Hey, look! Look! Duh boat! She's goin' like sixty Babee! *(They rush over to the gate)*

ANGEL Boy, dat's some boat! Dat's a crackerjack

DIPPY Yeah *(He imitates the sound of the bells, the foghorn, the engine)* Clang, clang! Oooh! Ch, ch, ch! Pool Poo! I'm a boat! Look, felluhs, I'm a boat Ch! Ch! Ch! *(He shuffles around, hands fore and aft)*

ANGEL *(points at the departing boat)* Lookit duh dame wavin' at us

DIPPY *(waves vigorously)* Yoo, hoo! Yoo hoo!

R B She ain't wavin' at us, yuh dope

SPIT At Gimpty

R B How'd you like tuh be on 'at boat?

DIPPY Boy! I bet yew cud cross 'ee ocean in 'at boat Yuh cud cross 'ee ocean in 'at boat, couldn't yuh, Gimpty?

GIMPTY What?

DIPPY Yuh cud cross 'ee ocean in 'at boat, couldn't yuh?
(ANGEL returns to the fire and pokes around in it)

GIMPTY Oh, yeah, I guess you could

R B A cawse yuh could, yuh dope, anybody knows 'at

SPIT *(sees ANGEL fishing out a mickey)* Hey, watcha doin'?

ANGEL *(testing his mickey)* My mickey's done Dey're done now, telluhs!

(The sounds of the yacht die off in the distance)

SPIT Look out! Look out! Wait a minute!
(They all rush to haul out their mickeys SPIT pushes them aside, and spears the biggest potato with a stick)

DIPPY Hey, Spit, dat big one's mine Remembuh I swiped it!

SPIT Shat ap, yuh dope! *(He punches DIPPY, who begins to snivel)*

DIPPY If Tommy wuz heah, yuh wouldn't do dat

SPIT Nuts tuh yew! Who's got da salt?

ANGEL *(takes a small packet of newspaper from his shoe-shine box)* Heah, I got it! *(The salt is passed around They eat their mickeys with much smacking of lips)*

DIPPY *(who has gotten the smallest mickey)* Ah! git even witchal!

SPIT Nuts!

DIPPY Yew wait till yuh ast me tuh do sumpm fuh yew some day Jus' wait See watcha git!

SPIT *(spits at DIPPY)* Right innce eye!

DIPPY *(wiping his eye)* Ah, yuh louse!

ANGEL *(remembering the conspiracy Slowly and deliberately, between munches)* Hey, Spit

SPIT. What?

ANGEL Dey wuz a guy heah yuh know da guy what Tommy stabbed? Well, he wuz heah

SPIT What fuh?

ANGEL He wuz lookin' fuh yew

SPIT Fuh me?

ANGEL Yeah

SPIT. What faw?

ANGEL He said he wuz gonna give yuh five bucks fuh snitchin' on who done it

SPIT Wheah izee? Wheah'd ee go?

DIPPY Did yew snitch on Tommy?

SPIT Sure Sure I did (*A chorus of disapproval follows this confession*
SPIT rises and doubles up his fists To
DIPPY) What's it to yuh?

DIPPY Nuttin'! (SPIT looks at ANGEL)

ANGEL Nuttin'!

T B Yew snitched on Tommy! Gese!

SPIT Aw, shat ap, 'r I'll give yuh yuh'r humps! (*He turns, looking for the benefactor*) Wheah'd he go? Which way? I want dat five bucks (TOMMY runs from behind the hopper, leaps onto SPIT's back, bearing him to the ground)

TOMMY (*sits astride SPIT, his knees pinning SPIT's arms down*) Yuh'll git it, yuh stool pigeon! In a pig's kapooch yuh will!

DIPPY Tommy! }
ANGEL Gese! } (*Simultaneously*)
T B Wow!

TOMMY Ah! give yuh sumptm yuh won' fuhgit so easy Say yuh prayuhs, yuh louse!

SPIT Lemme go! Lemme go!

TOMMY Oh, no, yuh don't!

SPIT Aw, Tommy, I didn't mean tuh Dey had me! De cops had me! What could I do?

TOMMY Yuh know watcha gonna git fuh it? (*He takes out his knife*
SPIT squeals with terror TOMMY jams his hand over SPIT's mouth) Shat ap!

DIPPY What's ee gonna do?

ANGEL Gash his cheek fum heah tuh heah!

T B No kid!

ANGEL Yeah!

DIPPY Gee whiz! Wow!

SPIT (*crying and pleading*) Tommy, don't, will yuh? I'll give yuh dose bike wheels I swiped I'll give yuh me stamps I'll give yuh me immies I'll give yuh dat five bucks Ony lemme go, will yuh?

TOMMY Dis time yuh don' git away wid it so easy, see?

SPIT Hey, felluhs! Hey, Gimpty! He's got a knife!

GIMPTY (*notices for the first time what's happening*) Stop that, you crazy kid!

TOMMY No!

GIMPTY (*starts toward TOMMY*) Let him go, Tommy!

TOMMY Come near me, Gimpty, an' I'll give it tuh yew. Stay back, or I'll give it tuh 'im right now! (*He places the knife point at SPIT's throat*)
GIMPTY stops short)

GIMPTY Getting easy, isn't it?

TOMMY Yeah, it's a cinch

GIMPTY Let him up, Tommy!

TOMMY No!

GIMPTY Tommy, give me that knife

TOMMY No!

GIMPTY Sell it to me! I'll buy it from you!

TOMMY No!

GIMPTY What's a matter? You a yellow-belly, Tommy?

TOMMY Who's a yellor-belly?

GIMPTY Only a yellow-belly uses a knife, Tommy. You'll be sorry for this!

TOMMY Well, he squealed on me! (*MILTY and DRINA come down the street*)

MILTY I dunno. He wuz heah befaw honest! (*Seeing the fight, he rushes to TOMMY and SPIT*) Wassamattuh, Tommy?

DRINA (*rushing to TOMMY and SPIT*) Tommy! Tommy! Where've you been?

SPIT Drina! Drina, he's godda knife! He wants a stab me!

TOMMY (*slaps SPIT*) Shat ap!

DRINA Tommy! Give me that knife! What's the matter with you? Aren't you in enough hot water now? Don't you understand what you're doing? (*Screams*) Give me that knife!

GIMPTY Go on, Tommy! (*Pause*)

TOMMY (*reluctantly hands the knife to DRINA*) Heah! (*He rises, releasing SPIT*) As SPIT scrambles to his feet, TOMMY kicks him in the rump, yelling) Beat it, yuh son uv a (*SPIT runs up the sidewalk*)

DRINA (*sharply*) Sh, Tommy!

SPIT (*from a safe distance, turns*) Tuh hell witcha, yuh bastid! (*Then he redoubles his speed, disappearing around the corner*)

TOMMY I'll kill yuh! (*He starts after SPIT, but DRINA grabs his arm, and pulls him back*)

DRINA Tommy, behave yourself!

TOMMY But 'ee squealed on me, Drina!

DRINA That's no excuse for this. Now it's knives! (*She snaps the blade shut*) What'll it be next? What's happening to you, Tommy?

TOMMY I wuz ony gonna scare 'im

DRINA (*grasps him by the shoulders and shakes him to emphasize what she's saying*) Listen to me! The cops came up to the house ten minutes ago. They were lookin' for you. You

stabbed some man! Why! Why!
(TOMMY turns away) Don't you see
what you're doing? They'll send you
to jail, Tommy!

TOMMY (all the fight gone) No, dey
won't Dey gotta ketch me foist

DRINA What do you mean?

TOMMY I'm gonna run away

DRINA Run away? Where to?

TOMMY I dunno

DRINA Where?

TOMMY Dere a plenty a places I kin
hitch tuh Lots a guys do

DRINA And what are you gonna eat?
Where you gonna sleep?

TOMMY I'll git along

DRINA How?

TOMMY I dunno Some way I'll
snitch stuff I dunno (Belabored
and uncertain) Aw, lemme alone!

DRINA I can see what's gonna hap-
pen to you (Fiercely) You'll become
a bum!

TOMMY Aw right! I'll become a bum,
den!

DRINA (hurls the knife onto the side-
walk, and screams) That's fine!
That's what Mamma worked her life
away for! That's what I've worked
since I was a kid for! So you could
become a bum That's great

TOMMY (shouting back) Aw right!
It's great Well, Gese, whadda yuh
want me tuh do? Let da cops git me

an' sen' me up the rivuh, Drina? I
don' wanna be locked up till I'm
twenty-one Izzat what yuh want me
tuh do?

DRINA (suddenly very soft and tender,
maternally) No, darling, no I won't
let that happen I won't let them
touch you, Tommy Don't worry

TOMMY Well, what else kin we do?

DRINA I'll run away with you, Tom-
my We'll go away, together, some
place

TOMMY No, Drina, yuh couldn't do
dat Yer a goul (Pause) Yuh know
what? Maybe, if I give myself up,
an' tell em I didn' mean tuh do it,
an if I swear on a Bible I'll nevuh
do it again, maybe dey'll let me go

DRINA No, Tommy, I'm not gonna
let you give yourself up No!

TOMMY Yeah, Drina
(Enter DOORMAN with a POLICE-
MAN)

DOORMAN (pointing to the boys).
There!

POLICEMAN (roars) Get ta hell out
a here! Go wan home!

T B Chickee da cop! (The boys scat-
ter DIPPY and T B duck into the
tenement doorway ANGEL and MILTY
scramble under the hopper)

POLICEMAN (to the DOORMAN)
Get some water! Put this out (MUL-
LIGAN, the policeman, turns to the
cowering figures under the hopper)
Yuh wanna set fire to these houses?
Lemme ketch you doin' this again
and I'll beat the b'jesus out a you!
(He slaps the blazing can with his

might stick to punctuate the warning Sparks fly up)

TOMMY (*slowly*) Yuh know, Drina, I tink 'at's what I ought tuh do

DRINA (*holding him tight, terrified In a hoarse whisper*) No I won't let you do that

TOMMY Yeah (*He detaches her arm, and goes to MULLIGAN*) Hey, mister!

MULLIGAN What do you want? Come on, beat it!

TOMMY Wait a minute! I'm Tommy McGrath

MULLIGAN What of it? (*The other boys creep back*)

TOMMY I'm da kid dat stabbed dat man today

MULLIGAN What!!! (*He grabs TOMMY's arm The DOORMAN comes running over to verify this*)

TOMMY (*his voice shrill and trembly*) Yeah He wuz chokin' me an breakin' my ahm so I did it

MULLIGAN So, you're the kid I bin lookin' fuh you

DOORMAN (*who has been staring at TOMMY, suddenly elated*) That's him all right That's him! Wait, I'll call Mr Griswald He'll tell you! (*He rushes off through the gateway*)

MULLIGAN All right I'll keep him here Don't you worry

DRINA (*goes to MULLIGAN, pleading*) Tommy! No, no, they can't take him Let him go, officer! Please!

MULLIGAN I can't do that, miss.

DRINA He didn't know what he was doing He's only a baby

MULLIGAN You tell it to the judge Tell it to the judge

DRINA (*trying to wrench TOMMY free*) No! Let him go! Let him go!

MULLIGAN (*pushes her away roughly*) Get away Don't try that! (*To GIMPTY* You better take her away or she'll get hurt

GIMPTY Drina, come here

DRINA No

MULLIGAN In a minute I'll take her to the station-house, too

TOMMY Aw, Drina, cut it out, will yuh? Dat ain' gonna help

GIMPTY He's right, you know

T B (*sidles over to TOMMY, whispering*) Hey, Tommy, if yuh go tuh rifawmatory, look up a guy named

MULLIGAN (*shoving T B away*) Git outta here! (*T B flies across the street*)

DRINA Yes, of course he's right I'm so I just don't know what I'm
DOORMAN (*enters with MR GRISWALD*) Yes, Mr Griswald, I'm sure it's the boy (*GRISWALD pushes him aside, and walks briskly to MULLIGAN*)

GRISWALD So you've caught him

MULLIGAN Yes, sir

DRINA He gave himself up!

GRISWALD Let me look at him (*He looks searchingly at TOMMY's face and nods*) Yes, this is the boy, all right

MULLIGAN Good

DRINA He gave himself up

GRISWALD (*turns to her*) What's that?

DRINA (*trying desperately to be calm*) I'm his sister!

GRISWALD Oh Well a fine brother you've got

MULLIGAN (*to ANGEL and MILTY, who have crept to the foreground*) Come on, get out a here! Beat it! (*They scramble back again under the hopper*)

DRINA Listen, mister! Give him another chance (*She clutches his arm. He winces and draws his breath in pain*) Please, will you?

GRISWALD Careful of that arm!

DRINA Oh! I'm sorry Give him another chance! Let him go!

GRISWALD Another chance to what? To kill somebody?

TOMMY I won' evuh do it again Yew wuz chokin' me an' I wuz seein' black already, an' I

DRINA Have a heart, mister! He's only a kid. He didn't know what he was doing

GRISWALD No?

DRINA No.

GRISWALD Then you should have taught him better

DRINA (*her impulse is to fight back, but she restrains herself*) Listen! He's a good boy. And he's got brains. Ask his teacher Miss Judell, P S 59. He used to get A,A,A all the time. He's smart

GRISWALD Then I can't see any excuse at all for him

DRINA (*flaring*) All right! He made a mistake! He's sorry! What's so terrible about that?

GIMPITY Sh! Drina!

GRISWALD I have a gash half an inch deep in my wrist. The doctor is afraid of infection. What do you say to that?

DRINA (*with such an effort at self-control that she trembles*) I'm sorry! I'm awfully sorry!

GRISWALD Sorry! That won't help, will it?

DRINA Will it help to send him to reform school?

GRISWALD I don't know. It'll at least keep him from doing it to someone else

DRINA But you heard him. He swore he wouldn't ever do it again

GRISWALD I'm afraid I can't believe that. He'll be better off where they'll send him. They'll take him out of the gutters and teach him a trade

DRINA (*explodes again*) What do you know about it?

GRISWALD I'm sorry I've no more time I can't stand here arguing with you (To MULLIGAN) All right, officer! I'll be down to make the complaint (Starts to exit)

GIMPTY (stepping in front of GRISWALD and blocking his path) Wait a minute, mister!

GRISWALD Yes?

GIMPTY May I talk to you a moment?

GRISWALD There's no use, really

GIMPTY Just a moment, please?

GRISWALD Well, what is it?

GIMPTY You know what happened here today? A man was shot killed

GRISWALD You mean that gangster?

GIMPTY Yes

GRISWALD What about it?

GIMPTY I killed him

GRISWALD You what?

MULLIGAN He's crazy (To GIMPTY) What are you trying to do?

GIMPTY It was I who told them where to find him

GRISWALD Well, that may be so Then you were doing your duty It's simple enough And I'm doing mine

DRINA (hysterically) No! It ain't the same! Martin was a butcher, he was like a mad dog He deserved to die But Tommy's a baby

GIMPTY Please! That's not the point!

DRINA It is!

MULLIGAN (to ANGEL and MILTY, who are back again) How many times have I gotta tell you! (They retreat)

GIMPTY Yes, maybe it is Anyway, I turned him over for my own selfish reasons And yet the thing I did, Griswald, was nothing compared to what you're doing Yeah Martin was a killer, he was bad, he deserved to die, true! But I knew him when we were kids He had a lot of fine stuff He was strong He had courage. He was a born leader He even had a sense of fair play But living in the streets kept making him bad Then he was sent to reform school Well, they reformed him all right! They taught him the ropes He came out tough and hard and mean, with all the tricks of the trade

GRISWALD But I don't see what you're driving at

GIMPTY I'm telling you! That's what you're sending this kid to

GRISWALD I'm afraid there's no alternative

DRINA Are you so perfect? Didn't you ever do anything you were sorry for later? (Screams) God! Didn't anybody ever forgive you for anything?

GRISWALD (looks at her in silence for a moment Then gently, and sympathetically) Of course I'm sorry I'm very sorry Believe me, I'm not being vindictive I'm not punishing him for hurting me As far as this goes— (Touches his bandaged wrist)

—I would forgive him gladly But you must remember that I'm a father that today he, unprovoked, beat my boy with a stick and stole his watch There are other boys like mine They've got to be protected, too I feel awfully sorry for you, but your brother belongs in a reformatory (To MULLIGAN) All right, officer! *(He shakes his head and disappears in the gateway)*

DRINA *(with a cry of despair)* What?

MULLIGAN All right! Let's go! (To TOMMY) Come along

T B *(edges over to TOMMY)* Hey, Tommy, wait! Look up a guy named Smokey!

MULLIGAN Get away from here I'll bounce one off your head!

TOMMY *(looking back to DRINA)* Don' worry, Drina I ain' scared

DRINA *(trying to smile for TOMMY)* Of course not, darling I'm coming with you *(Starts up)*

MULLIGAN Yeah, I think you better Come on! *(He calls over his shoulder to the DOORMAN)* Put out that fire!

DOORMAN Oh, yes yes, officer! *(Hurries off, through the gate MULLIGAN and TOMMY go up the street DRINA starts to follow T B catches her arm)*

T B Drina! Drina! Wait!

DRINA No, I can't, I gotta

T B It's important It's about Tommy!

DRINA *(turns)* What?

T B *(very knowing and very helpful He's been through this before)* Look, Drina, dere's a guy at mfawm school named Smokey like dat, Smokey, dey call him Smokey Yew tell Tommy tuh be nice tuh him and give im t'ings like cigarettes an dat Cause dis guy Smokey, he knows a lot of swell rackets fuh Tommy when ee gits out cause Tommy's a wise kid an

DRINA *(scared, helpless, begins to sob)* Oh, Mom, why did you leave us? I don't know what to do, Mom I don't know where to turn I wish I was dead and buried with you

T B *(puzzled by this unexpected reaction to his good advice)* What's a mattuh? What'd I say? I didn' say nuttin' What'd I say?

GIMPTY Sh Shut up! *(He goes to DRINA, who is sobbing her heart out, and puts a protective arm around her)* You poor kid! You poor kid Stop crying Stop crying now

DRINA I'm all night I'll be all night in a minute

GIMPTY Now you stop crying and listen to me Tomorrow morning you meet me right here at half past nine We're going downtown We're going to get the best lawyer in this city, and we'll get Tommy free

DRINA But that'll cost so much!

GIMPTY Don't worry about that We'll get him out

DRINA Do you really think so?

GIMPTY I know so

DRINA Oh, God bless you . you're
so (She breaks into sobs again)

ANGEL (looks upward, entranced).
Holy smokes!

GIMPTY. Now, now You go along
now and stick by Tommy

DIPPY Whee!

ANGEL Look a dat!

DRINA (controlling herself) You've
been so awfully good to us, I I
hate to ask for anything else, but

T B Boy! Right up tuh duh skyl!

ANGEL Right up tuh duh stahs!

GIMPTY Sure, what is it?

DIPPY I how high ah dey? How high
ah duh stahs?

DRINA I wish you'd come along with
us now I know if you're there
they wouldn't dare touch (Her
voice catches) Tommy!

DOORMAN (turning back at the gate)
And you rats better not start any
more trouble, if you know what's
good for you! (He goes in The boys
wait till he is out of ear-shot, then
they hurl a chorus of abuse)

GIMPTY Me? I'm nobody I can't

DRINA I wish you would Please?

GIMPTY (softly) All right (They go
up the street, his arm still around
her, his cane clicking on the sidewalk
even after they've disappeared from
sight Awed by the scene, the kids
gather about the fire again)

| | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| MILTY Gay cock of'm yam! | } (Simul- taneously) |
| ANGEL Fongoola! | |
| DIPPY Nuts ta yew! | |
| T B In yuhr hat! | |

ANGEL Gese, wadda yuh tink'll hap-
pen tuh Tommv?

ANGEL (plays a mocking tune on his
kazoo T B sings the lyrics) Te da
da da da bushwah Te da da bush-
wah

MILTY Dey'll git 'im off Dey'll git
'im off Yuh'll see

ANGEL Ah! goul him!

T B Even if dey don't, yuh loin a
barrel of good tings at rifawm school
Smokey once loined me how tuh
open a lock wid a hair pin Boy! It's
easy! It's a cinch! I loined one-two-
three, but now I fuhgit

DIPPY (laughs) Yeah
(After this outburst, there is a long
pause They watch the smoke coil-
ing upward)

(The DOORMAN appears uncoiling a
garden hose He pushes ANGEL aside,
points the nozzle into the can, and
releases the stream The fire hisses,
spts, and dies A thick pillar of smoke
ascends skyward out of the can)

MILTY (softly) Gee! Looka dat
smoke!

T B Dat reminds me—all a time at
rifawm school Smokey usta sing a
song about Angel—"If I had de
wings of a Angel"
(They laugh.)

MILTY Angel ain't got no wings

DIPPY Real ones got wings I saw
it in a pitcha once

(ANGEL starts playing "If I had the
wings of an angel" on his kazoo)

T B Dat's right Dat's it! (In a qua-
very voice he accompanies ANGEL)

If I had de wings of a angel Ovuh
dese prison walls I wud fly (The
others join in, swelling the song)
Straight tuh dee yahms a my mud-
dah Ta da da, da da (A passing
tramp steamer hoots mournfully The
smoke continues to roll out of the
can, as their cacophony draws out to
a funereal end) Da Da da
dum

CURTAIN

Boy Meets Girl

BY BELLA AND SAMUEL SPEWACK

TO
JO DAVIDSON
WHOSE HOSPITALITY AND
ENCOURAGEMENT DELAYED THE COMPLETION OF
THIS PLAY THREE MONTHS.

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Boy Meets Girl was first produced at the Cort Theatre, New York City, by George Abbott, on November 27, 1935, and closed on June 19, 1937. Following is the original cast

| | |
|------------------|--------------------|
| ROBERT LAW | Allyn Joslyn |
| LARRY TOMS | Charles McClelland |
| J CARLYLE BENSON | Jerome Cowan |
| ROSETTI | Everett H Sloane |
| MR FRIDAY (C F) | Royal Beal |
| PEGGY | Peggy Hart |
| MISS CREWS | Lea Penman |
| RODNEY BEVAN | James MacColl |
| GREEN | Garson Kanin |
| SLADE | Maurice Sommers |
| SUSIE | Joyce Arling |
| A NURSE | Helen Gardner |
| DOCTOR | Perry Ivins |
| CHAUFFEUR | Edison Rice |
| YOUNG MAN | Philip Faversham |
| STUDIO OFFICER | George W Smith |
| CUTTER | Robert Foulk |
| ANOTHER NURSE | Marjone Lytell |
| MAJOR THOMPSON | John Clarke |

Directed by George Abbott

Settings by Arne Lundborg

SCENES

ACT ONE

Mr Friday's Office, the Royal Studios in Hollywood

ACT TWO

SCENE I

A Neighborhood Theatre Seven months later

SCENE II

Mr Friday's office

SCENE III

The same Several hours later

ACT THREE

SCENE I

A hospital corridor Three weeks later

SCENE II

In your home

SCENE III

Mr Friday's office

BOY MEETS GIRL

ACT ONE

The room we see is one of a suite of three, comprising the sanctum of MR C ELLIOT FRIDAY, a supervisor, sometimes called a producer, who is engaged in manufacturing motion pictures in Hollywood, California

In its present state the room is a happy combination of the Regency and Russell Wright periods—given over to pale green, mauve and canary yellow, with Rodier-cloth-covered easy chairs and couch. A magnificent, be-French-phonied desk is at one end of the room. On it rests the inter-office dictograph, over which in the course of the play we hear the voice of the great B K, chief executive of the studio. Beside it, appropriately, stands an amiable photograph of Mrs C Elliot Friday, a cultured if fatuous lady, a copy of "Swann's Way" (leaves uncut), a bronze nude astride an ash tray, a bottle of Pyramidon and a copy of "Variety." In the trash basket is a copy of "Hollywood Reporter" (It was very unkind to MR FRIDAY.) On the wall back of the desk are bookshelves with pots of hanging ivy on the top shelf, the rest given over, curiously enough, to books—and occasional bric-a-brac. There are a few end tables with ash trays and boxes of cigarettes, for it is the unwritten law in Hollywood that supervisors must provide cigarettes for writers during conferences and other times of stress. The two windows, although of the old-fashioned, non-casement kind, are framed by tasteful, expensive drapes and are partially concealed by half-drawn Venetian blinds. (A supervisor would lose caste without Venetian blinds.) The door left leads to an anteroom where sits MISS CREWS, secretary to MR FRIDAY. The door at right rear leads to a smaller office where MR FRIDAY sometimes thinks in solitude. This room contains MR FRIDAY's Commencement Day photograph (Harvard '19), snapshots of B K's wedding, at which MR FRIDAY served as an usher, and a huge picture of Pola Negri inscribed "Sincerely yours." There are other photographs with more florid inscriptions upon faces once famous and since vanished in film dust. The room is also memorable for the fact that MR FRIDAY—a bit of a diplomat in his way—sometimes keeps earnest writers here while he submits their scripts to other writers in his inner office. At times as many as fifteen bright minds are thus let loose upon a C Elliot Friday production, with sometimes startling results.

All this, however, is very much by the by. It is really more important to note that through those Venetian blinds you can feel the sweet sterility of the desert that is so essentially Southern California. The sun is bright of course, and it pours endlessly through the windows. The time is two o'clock, and the boys have been at it since noon.

One of the boys is BENSON—J CARLYLE BENSON, whom we discover prone on a couch. He is in his thirties and in his flannels. Years ago, as he will tell you, he worked as a scene painter and a property boy. He became a writer because he learned how bricks were made and laid. He knows every cliché, every formula, and in his heart of hearts he really believes the fairy tale is

a credo of life And he's a damned nice guy, handicapped somewhat by the fact that he married a beautiful but extravagant young woman who obviously doesn't love him They live in a gorgeous home, have four dogs, two cars and, as MR FRIDAY would put it, "a menage"

The other member of the writing team is ROBERT LAW whom you will find listed in O'Brien's "Best Short Stories" of five years ago He came to Hollywood to make a little money and run right back to Vermont where he could really write He is rather handsome, a little round-shouldered, smokes incessantly He's a damned nice guy, too

There is a deep and abiding affection between the two men, even though LAW's nostalgia for realism and sincerity and substance finds no echoing response in MR BENSON They have one great thing in common—their mutual love of a great gag, a practical joke to enliven the monotony of the writing factory.

For we are dealing here with a factory that manufactures entertainment in approved sizes, that puts the seven arts right on the belt And it is this very quality that makes MR FRIDAY's office as fascinating as a power house and a good deal more entertaining

The other inmates of the room are LARRY TOMS—you know LARRY TOMS—a Western star, and one ROSETTI, an agent It is MR ROSETTI's business to see to it that MR TOMS is profitably employed, for MR ROSETTI collects ten per cent of MR TOMS's weekly salary which, despite the star's fading popularity, is still a respectable sum MR TOMS is handsome, of course He is also parsimonious He leads a completely righteous life, and if you don't like him it isn't our fault, in all respects he is an extremely admirable character

As the curtain goes up we see that LAW is on his feet and obviously he has been telling a story to MR TOMS—a story that MR TOMS is expected to re-enact before the camera

LAW And this bozo comes up to you and you look him straight in the eye and you say, "Why, damn your soul, I loved her before you ever married her" And then in walks the bitch, and she cries, "Larry, I heard everything you said" And you just look at her, and there's a long pause—a long pause And then finally you say, "Did you?" That's all Just a plain, quiet, simple "Did you?" Boy, what a moment! (He lies down on the couch beside BENSON)

LARRY But what's the story about?

BENSON (rolling over) Love!

LAW (singing) "Love is the sweetest thing—"

LARRY Now, come on, boys—get off the couch This ain't fair I got a lot at stake in this picture It's the last one in my contract If I get a poor story I'm out in the cold

LAW Shivering with a million dollar annuity

ROSETTI Now, gentlemen, don't let's get personal

LARRY (rises and crosses to couch) When they told me I was getting the

star team of writers on the lot, I was all for it. But you've done nothing but clown around, and the shooting date's only two weeks off. I've got to play this picture.

LAW Why?

LARRY (*swallowing*) Tell me your story in a few simple words.

LAW Mr. Benson, what's our story?

BENSON How the hell do I know?

LAW (*sits up*) Didn't you listen?

BENSON No. We ought to have a stenographer.

LAW But they won't wear tights. And I can't dictate to a stenographer who won't wear tights.

LARRY Now listen, boys—

LAW Don't speak to me. You don't like our story.

LARRY I didn't say I didn't like it. I couldn't follow it. (*He slumps in disgust*.)

BENSON (*indignantly*) You couldn't follow it? Listen, I've been writing stories for eleven years. Boy meets girl. Boy loses girl. Boy gets girl.

LAW Or—girl meets boy. Girl loses boy. Girl gets boy. Love will find a way. Love never loses. Put your money on love. You can't lose. (*Rises and saunters to window*) I'm getting hungry.

BENSON It's a sorry state of affairs when an actor insists on following a story. Do you think this is a golf tournament?

ROSETTI (*earnestly*) If I may make a point, I don't think you're showing the proper respect to one of the biggest stars in this studio. A man who's not only captivated millions of people but is going to captivate millions more—

BENSON (*wearily*) With his little lasso—

LARRY Just because I don't get Gable's fan mail don't mean I ain't got his following. A lot of those that want to write me ain't never learned how.

LAW Benson, injustice has been done. We've been lacking in respect for the idol of illiteracy.

BENSON Do we apologize?

LAW No!

ROSETTI Well, let me tell you something. Before I became an agent I taught diction for years, and Larry Toms is potentially the greatest actor I've ever met. And I can prove it with X-rays. I was just taking them up to show B. K. He's got the Barrymore larynx. I'll put his larynx against John Barrymore's and I defy you to tell me which is which. (*Takes X-rays from brief case. Gives one to BENSON, one to LAW.*)

LARRY I couldn't tell it myself and it's my own larynx.

BENSON (*drawling*) Say—are you sure this is his larynx?

ROSETTI (*the diplomat, retrieving X-rays*) Gentlemen, I wouldn't be surprised with the proper training if I ~~any~~ couldn't sing. That opens up

the whole field of musicals (*Puts brief case on chair*)

BENSON (*to LAW*) What are we waiting for?

LAW Lunch

LARRY (*angrily rising*) I'm getting fed up with this I got writers who are just plain crazy—a producer who can't concentrate—and ain't even here—and— (*Throws hat on floor and starts for BENSON and LAW LAW moves to back of couch and BENSON goes up to door*)

ROSETTI (*crossing down on LARRY's left*) Now now Larry don't lose your temper

LARRY (*righteously*) The idea of writers getting fifteen hundred a week for acting like hoodlums

LAW I agree with you

LARRY Huh?

LAW We're not writers We're hacks If we weren't, would I be sitting here listening to your inarticulate grunts?

LARRY Huh?

LAW That's exactly what I mean For two cents, Benson, I'd take the next train back to Vermont

LARRY That's all right with me

BENSON Will you forget Vermont?

LAW At least I wouldn't have to sit around with *that* in Vermont I'd write—really write My God, I wrote once I wrote a book A darn good book I was a promising young novelist O'Brien reprinted three of my

stories 1928-1929-1930 And in 1935 I'm writing dialogue for a horse!

LARRY (*enraged*) Now, listen—

ROSETTI (*pleading*) Larry—Larry, take a deep breath The boys mean no harm Exhale!

LAW (*sniffing*) I smell carbon monoxide

LARRY One more crack, that's all—just one more crack! (*Phone rings*)

ROSETTI (*at phone*) Hello oh, yes just a minute For you, Benson

BENSON (*taking up phone*) Yes, speaking Who? Of course, Mrs Benson's check is good How much is it for? Thirty-five hundred? Oh! I hope it was real ermine Certainly it's all right You put the check through tomorrow (*Hangs up, dials phone*)

ROSETTI (*with a feline purr*) Ermine is a nice fur (*MISS CREWS enters regally, puts letters on desk*)

LARRY (*grumbling*) Miss Crews, what's keeping C F?

MISS CREWS He's still up with B K. (*She exits regally*)

BENSON (*into phone*) Jim? Benson Listen, sell three of my Municipal Fives this afternoon, will you? And put it in my joint account in the Security I've got a check to meet Never mind about that I'll talk to her Right (*Hangs up*)

LAW Pearl is certainly spreading prosperity

BENSON What the hell? She's only a kid She's having a good time What's money for? (C F enters C F is, of course, C ELLIOTT FRIDAY)

C F (*briskly*) Good morning

ROSETTI (*rises*) Good morning, C F

LARRY (*rises and sits*) Hello, C F (BENSON *lies on sofa* LAW *rises and salaams Hindu fashion, as popularized by Mr De Mille*)

C F Boys, no antics, please We've got a heavy day ahead of us (*Sits at desk, picks up phone Into phone*) I don't want to be disturbed by anybody—understand? And order some lunch A plate of raw carrots, and a bottle of certified raw milk See that it's raw Bring enough for everybody (*About to hang up*)

LAW (*rises*) Just a moment (*Takes phone*) Mr Benson and Mr Law want two cups of chicken broth—some ham hocks—cabbage—lemon meringue pie—and some bicarbonate of soda (*Hangs up, returns to couch*)

C F You're slaughtering yourselves, boys You won't be able to think with that poison in your stomachs, and we've got to think I've just seen the front office Boys, we're facing a crisis

ROSETTI (*eagerly*) Any truth in the report, C F, that Gaumont British wants to buy the studio?

C F You know as much about it as I do, Rosetti

LAW Why sell? I thought we were sitting pretty We're in receivership

ROSETTI Well, I'm going up to see B K I hope you boys get a good story for Larry

C F (*ignoring him, C F can ignore beautifully*) As a matter of fact, you may as well know it There may be a reorganization

BENSON Again?

C F And you know my position I'm the only college-bred man in the studio They resent me

LAW The big snobs

C F Just because I've always tried to do something fine, something dignified, something worth while, I'm being hammered on all sides Boys, if my next picture fails, I'm out And you're out, Larry And it won't do you boys any good either Of course you can always write plays

LAW I don't see why not We never wrote any

C F I have an idea for a play I want to discuss with you sometime You'll be wild about it Just one set, too—simple to produce, and practically anybody can play it Katharine Cornell would be marvelous for the girl She dies in the first act

LARRY Listen here, C F, I ain't in the theatre What about my picture?

C F Boys, we need a big picture Not just a good story I want to do something fine—with sweep, with scope—stark, honest, gripping, adult, but with plenty of laughs and a little hokum

LARRY (*bitterly*) And no "Did you?" scenes

C.F. Something we'll be proud of Not just another picture, but the picture of the year A sort of Bengal Lancer, but as Kipling would have done it. Maybe we could wire Kipling and get him to write a few scenes It would be damned good publicity (*PEGGY enters, PEGGY is the manicurist on the lot*) Oh, come in come in, Peggy (*PEGGY puts tray of manicurist's paraphernalia on desk, moves small chair at C.E.'s side, takes bowl and exits for water*)

BENSON (*in astonishment*) He doesn't think we're as good as Kipling

C.F. (*quickly*) Mind you, not that I think Kipling is a great writer A storyteller, yes But greatness? Give me Proust anytime Now, boys, how about a story?

LAW Nestling on your desk for two weeks there's a script we wrote for Larry Toms

BENSON A beautiful script That one with my fingerprints on the cover

C.F. (*picking up script, holding it in his hands as if weighing it*) This? This won't do

LAW That's where you're wrong I had it weighed at the A & P and the manager went wild over it (*C.F. puts script on top of dictograph*
MISS CREWS enters)

MISS CREWS Excuse me, Mr Friday, but Casting wants to know how many midgets you'll need

C.F. (*irritably*) Midgets? I don't need any midgets

MISS CREWS Casting says you ordered midgets and they've got them

C.F. They're crazy I'm not doing a horror story (*Phone rings, at phone*) Hello It's for you, Benson

BENSON For me?

C.F. I think it's Mrs Benson Listen, Miss Crews, we're in conference Please don't disturb us again

MISS CREWS Yes, Mr Friday (*She exits*)

BENSON (*into telephone*) Oh, hello, darling Yes, I know you've been shopping Why don't you try Woolworth's? No, I'm not mad

Oh, you're taking the dogs for a walk? That's good Oh, no, I can't take you to lunch I'm in a story conference But look, darling, I'm in a story conference Hello (*He mops his brow and tries to shake off his gloom*)

C.F. How is Mrs Benson?

BENSON Swell

C.F. I must get Mrs Friday to invite her over to her French class All the wives are taking it up very seriously Gives them something to do, and as I said to Mrs Friday I'm a linguist—why shouldn't you be? That's the great thing in marriage—mutual interests (*BENSON crosses to couch*) Of course, Mrs Benson isn't the studious type, is she? Beautiful girl, though Where were we? What was I saying?

BENSON (*crosses back to desk, sighs, indicates script*) You were saying that this is one of the greatest picture scripts ever written

C F (*with a superior smile*) Now, just a minute—

looks up at him suddenly) Relax! (*She begins filing*)

LAW (*quickly*) And do you know why? Because it's the same story Larry Toms has been doing for years

BENSON (*wheeling*) But, Peggy, you go to pictures, don't you?

BENSON We *know* it's good

PEGGY No

LAW Griffith used it Lubitsch used it And Eisenstein's coming around to it

BENSON But you've seen Larry's pictures and enjoyed them?

PEGGY No

BENSON Boy meets girl Boy loses girl Boy gets girl

BENSON As millions of others have

LAW The great American fairy tale Sends the audience back to the relief rolls in a happy frame of mind

LAW Why, one man sent him a rope all the way from Manila—with instructions

BENSON And why not?

C F Boys, this isn't getting us anywhere

LAW The greatest escape formula ever worked out in the history of civilization

BENSON (*assuming the manner of a district attorney, barking at PEGGY*). Peggy, do you mean to sit there and tell me you haven't seen *one* Larry Toms picture?

C F Of course, if you put it that way but, boys, it's hackneyed

LAW You mean classic

PEGGY I saw one

C F (*triumphantly*) *Hamlet* is a classic—but it isn't hackneyed!

BENSON Ah!

LAW *Hamlet* isn't hackneyed? Why, I'd be ashamed to use that poison gag He lifted that right out of the Italians (*PEGGY enters and crosses to her chair and sits*) Ask Peggy (*PEGGY puts the bowl now half filled with water down on the desk*)

PEGGY *Night in Death Valley*

BENSON This isn't getting us anywhere, eh? How would you like to see *Night in Death Valley* again—with a new title?

BENSON Yes, let's ask Peggy . if she wants to see Larry Toms in a different story She's your audience

PEGGY I wouldn't

PEGGY Don't ask me anything, Mr Benson I've got the damndest toothache (*She takes C F's hand and*

BENSON That's all Step down. (*Crosses to couch, slaps LAW on shoulder*) May I point out to this court that the body was found only two feet away, in an open field, with every door and window shut? (*TO LAW*) Your witness (*He exits*)

LAW (*rises*) I've got to see a man about a woman (*He exits Our writers have vanished They love to vanish from story conferences*)

C F (*rises*) Come back here! (*Picks up phone*)

LARRY That's what I mean—clowning

C F (*at phone*) Miss Crews, leave word at the gate Benson and Law are not to be allowed off the lot They're to come right back to my office (*Hangs up*)

LARRY Why do you stand for it?

C F Larry, those boys are crazy, but they've got something

LARRY They've been fired off every other lot

C F I'll fire them off this one, after they've produced a story I've made up my mind to that Meanwhile, patience

LARRY That's easy to say

C F You can't quibble with the artistic temperament when it produces

LARRY (*grumbling*) They've been producing nothing but trouble around here

(*YOUNG ACTOR enters in the resplendent uniform of the Coldstream Guards His name is RODNEY Both uniform and actor explain themselves as the play proceeds*)

MISS CREWS Right in here

RODNEY How do you do?

C F What do you want?

RODNEY Why, Wardrobe sent me. Do you approve the uniform?

C F Uniform for what?

RODNEY Young England

C F You see, Larry—three pictures in production—all going on at the same time—I'm standing on my head—and then they wonder what's wrong with the industry (*Rises, barks at RODNEY*) Stand over there (*MISS CREWS exits C F surveys the actor judicially*) I can't say I like the hat (*He is referring, of course, to the awe-inspiring bushy*)

RODNEY (*mildly*) The hat is authentic, sir

C F I still don't like it You can't photograph it (*Phone rings*) Yes?—What midgets? I didn't send out any call for midgets Get rid of them (*Hangs up He jiggles the phone*) Get me Wardrobe (*Hubbub is heard outside window*) Who's making all that noise? (*PEGGY goes to the window*) This is C F—I don't like the hat—I don't care if it's authentic or not—Who's making all that noise?

PEGGY (*at window*) Midgets

C F (*into phone*) Change the hat
You can't photograph it
We want to see faces, not hats
(*Hangs up Stone crashes through the window left*) Good God! Somebody's thrown a rock through my window (*To RODNEY*) Here, you—pull down those blinds

RODNEY (*always the little gentleman*) Yes, sir

C F (*in phone*) Get me Casting
This is C F Somebody's thrown

a rock through my window One of the midgets Of course they're indignant! Sour grapes! I'm telling you to get rid of them (*Hangs up*)

RODNEY What shall I tell Wardrobe, sir?

C F Tell them I don't like the hat

RODNEY (*smiles diffidently*) Well, it's very peculiar that you should take umbrage at the hat as it happens to be the only correct item in the entire outfit

C F What's that?

RODNEY This coat doesn't hang properly—these buttons are far too large These shoulder straps are absurd, of course And the boots if I may say so are too utterly fantastic Any Guardsman would swoon away at the sight of them

C F So!

RODNEY The hat, however, is authentic

C F It is, eh? What's your salary

RODNEY As I understand it, I'm to receive seven dollars a day Monday and Tuesday, when I speak no lines, and fifteen dollars a day Thursday, Friday and Saturday, when I propose a toast

C F And you're telling a fifty-thousand-dollar-a-year man how to run his picture Look here—I spent two weeks in London, my man, at the Savoy, and I watched them change the Guards, personally

RODNEY At the Savoy?

C F Young man, we have a technical adviser on this picture And it doesn't happen to be you

RODNEY Quite He's a splendid fellow, but he's a third-generation Canadian He's never even been to London

C F So you don't like the uniform and you don't like the technical expert (*Smoothly*) What's your name?

RODNEY Rodney Bevan Of course, it's a sort of *nom de plume*, or *nom de guerre*—

C F Rodney Bevan (*Picks up phone*) Give me Casting This is C F Extra here by the name of Rodney Bevan doesn't like his uniform Fire him

RODNEY (*aghast*) Fire? Have you given me the sack?

C F I've enough trouble without extras telling me how to make pictures That's the trouble with this business A man spends his life at it, and anybody can walk in and tell him how to run it

RODNEY But I merely suggested—(*MISS CREWS enters*)

MISS CREWS Mr Green and Mr Slade are outside, Mr Friday They want you to hear the song

RODNEY I've waited a long time for this opening—

C F Get out! (*To MISS CREWS*) I'm in no mood for music (*GREEN and SLADE enter*)

GREEN We've got it, and you're going to listen If you don't like it,

Schulberg's nuts about it (SLADE crosses to piano and starts playing the song) We wrote it for Young England, but it's flexible—Flexible as hell

(MISS CREWS exits RODNEY turns forlornly and fades out through the door What else can he do?)

C F Boys, I'm in no mood for—

GREEN It's a touching little thing, but, boy, what power! There's a "Pain in My Heart, and My Heart's on My Sleeve" Like the title? (SLADE is one of those who glues himself to a piano He's all pasted together now, and his fingers fly GREEN sings with all the fervid sincerity of Georgie Jessel with a cold)

You promised love undying,
And begged me to believe,
Then you left, and left me crying
With a pain in my heart, and my
heart on my sleeve

It isn't right to show it,
To flaunt the way I grieve,
But the world will quickly know it,
For the pain's in my heart and my
heart on my sleeve

I confess that I'm a mess—
The way I lived my life,
But what does it matter?
Yes, I guess that happiness
Is only for a wife,
Sorrow isn't served on a silver platter

I really shouldn't blame you
Because you chose to leave,
But one thing forever will shame
you—
It's the pain in my heart, and my
heart on my sleeve

(During the song MISS CREWS enters with glass of orange juice She crosses

around desk, puts glass in front of C F, gets book from lower drawer)

C F (as GREEN finishes song) Miss Crews, get hold of Benson and Law! (MISS CREWS exits)

LARRY (as the din grows) I've worked for Biograph I've worked for Monogram I've worked for Columbia I've worked for Warners I've worked for Metro but a screwier outfit I never did see! (BENSON and LAW enter in costume of beekeepers They, too, wear bushies)

C F (whose nails are being buffed) What do you want? (At the musicians) Quiet! (At the bushies, for C F doesn't deign to look at actors' faces) I told Wardrobe I don't like the hats

BENSON He doesn't like the hats

LAW Call Jock Whitney We want to be in color

C F (exasperated) For God's sake! This is a fine time to be masquerading

BENSON (leaping into character, picking up stone) Wait! What a pretty stone! I wonder where that came from

LAW (in his own big scene) I wonder

BENSON (transporting himself to the desert) I think we've found gold, partner

LAW (grabbing for it) Gold!

BENSON Stand back—you desert rat!

LAW Gold—after all these years! I'm going mad mad mad .

Yes, I've been kissed,
But like Oliver Twist,
I'm still crying for more

C.F. Oh, stop it, boys

LARRY (*suddenly inspired* To C.F.) I wouldn't be surprised if they threw that there rock through the window

(*Without waiting for an answer, to C.F.*) How did you like the song, C.F.?

BENSON What an innuendo!

LAW Darn good Can you play *Over the Waves*?

C.F. You didn't do that, did you, boys? Smash my Vita-glass?

C.F. Boys, can't you be sensible for a moment? You're trying my patience What about our story?

LAW To think—after all these years of loyal, faithful service— Larry Toms, you ought to be ashamed!

LAW What about it? It's a rich, proletarian part for Larry

BENSON The man with the poison-pen mind We're going to tell Louella Parsons on you

LARRY It just don't make sense

C.F. (*impatiently*) Very well . very well But I still have my suspicions (*Snap*) Now what about our story?

LAW I resent that as a gentleman and a grammarian

BENSON Right here (*Indicating script on desk*)

C.F. Now really, boys, I'm tolerant, but I've got to see results I'm not one to put the creative urge in a strait jacket But you've been fired off every other lot in this industry for your pranks Perhaps you've forgotten, Benson, but when I hired you for this job you promised me to behave in no uncertain terms And you promised me Law would toe the line Now, I'm warning you, boys Let's get to work Let's concentrate (*Crosses above desk to chair back of desk*) Do you realize you boys are making more than the President of the United States?

LAW (*takes a statuette from top of desk*) Mr Benson, for the most brilliant script of the year, the Academy takes great pleasure in presenting to you this little gargoyle—

BENSON Wrap it up, please
(LAW drops it in LARRY's hat and stands back of couch Music plays)

LAW But look at the fun he's having!

LARRY (*rising in a dither*) Now, listen—

LARRY (*angrily*) Now looka here—

(C.F. crosses below desk, retrieves statue, places it back on desk)

GREEN How do you like the song, C.F.?

GREEN (*to SLADE at piano*) What do you say to this, Otto, for the second chorus

C.F. It lacks body

LAW No breasts

C F That's exactly it— Pallid

GREEN Come on, Otto

SLADE (*starts for door*) This isn't my idea of a fair audition

GREEN Wait'll they hear it at the Coconut Grove They'll be sorry (GREEN and SLADE exit PEGGY enters and LAW, humming "Merry Widow," intercepts her, dances a few measures with her)

C F Listen, boys—we've had enough of this

(SUSIE enters carrying a tray SUSIE is a waitress We worship SUSIE Why describe her? We'll tell you what she wears—the full-blown costume of a Hollywood waitress Of her blonde fragility, her intricate but blameless sex life, and the ineffable charm of her touching naiveté we won't say a word)

LAW Lunch!

BENSON Grub! Susie, I love you (PEGGY exits She never comes back Why should she?)

C F Wait a minute—wait a minute— (LAW gets end table and places it in front of couch BENSON takes tray from SUSIE)

SUSIE (*weakly*) Please, Mr Benson, be careful

LAW Put that tray right down here

SUSIE (*quavering*) Thanks It's not very heavy (*She then collapses neatly on the floor*)

C F Good Lord!

LAW (*bending over her*) Susie— Susie—

BENSON (*grabbing phone*) Get the doctor over here—right away—

LAW Somebody give me water (BENSON takes glass from tray on table)

C F (*disapprovingly*) This is a nice thing to happen in my office Who is this girl, anyway?

LAW (*putting water to her as he kneels beside her*) Come on, Susie (*Lifting her head up to glass*)

LARRY (*whose father wrote letters to the papers*) That commissary shouldn't employ people with epilepsy

C F (*bitter, still*) I had an actor who did that to me once Held up my shooting schedule fourteen days

LAW She's all right Here

SUSIE Did you all get napkins? (*Opens her eyes for the first time*)

BENSON Now, Susie—get into this chair

SUSIE Thanks (*She sits*)

C F (*sharply*) What's wrong with you, young woman?

SUSIE (*still quavering*) Nothing I'm much better now Thanks

C F Where's that doctor?

SUSIE Did you call for a doctor? You didn't have to

C F Do you get these epileptic fits often?

SUSIE I didn't have an epileptic fit ing to have a baby " Susie, you're magnificent

C F Then what's wrong with you?

SUSIE There's nothing wrong it's only natural

C F Only natural for you to come into my office and collapse on the floor

SUSIE Oh, no, sir it's only natural for you to feel sick when you're going to have a baby

LAW A baby!

BENSON Susie, you're not going to have a baby!

SUSIE That's what they told me

BENSON Susie's going to have a baby!

LAW Let's get drunk!

C F (*into phone*) Tell that doctor not to come You heard me I don't want him (*He hangs up*) I won't have my office converted into a maternity ward! (*He turns on SUSIE*) I don't think much of your husband—letting you work at a time like this!

SUSIE Oh, but I haven't got a husband

C F Hub?

SUSIE (*rises*) You'd better eat your lunch before it gets cold Have you all got napkins?

LAW (*humbly*) The new generation! Faces the facts of nature without squeamishness, without subterfuge "I haven't got a husband," she says "It's only natural," she says "I'm go-

SUSIE I'm quitting at the end of the week so I thought I'd tell everybody why I wouldn't want them to think I was discontented

LAW Our little mother!

SUSIE Oh, don't make fun of me

LAW (*rises*) Fun? I've never been so touched in my life Susie, I feel purified

BENSON Susie—can we be godfather?

SUSIE Do you mean it?

BENSON Do we mean it? We haven't got a baby And we've been collaborating for years

SUSIE Oh, I think that would be wonderful for Happy to have wnters for a godfather

BENSON Happy?

SUSIE I'm going to call him Happy—even if he's a girl Because I want him to be happy—even if he's a girl

BENSON Beautiful! A beautiful thought! Where are you going to have this baby, Susie?

SUSIE In the County Hospital It's all fixed I was very lucky because I've only lived in the county three months and I'm not eligible

C F Now, listen, boys—enough of this

LAW (*into phone*) Give me the Cedars of Lebanon Hospital—and make it snappy

BENSON (*glibly*) We've got a baby!

C F Just a minute Hang up that phone (BENSON *good-naturedly brushes his arm down*)

LAW Dr Marx, please Willy, this is Law of Benson and Law Reserve the best suite in the house for us I'm serious Dead serious A little friend of ours is going to have a baby and we want the goddamnedest confinement you've got in stock

BENSON Day and night nurse

LAW (*To BENSON*) And not the one with the buck teeth either She's dynamite (*Into phone*) We want everything that Gloria Swanson had—only double What's that? Bill? Bill the studio, of course (*He hangs up*)

C F You'll do no such thing! What kind of a gag is this? (MISS CREWS *enters*)

MISS CREWS Do you want to hear the trumpet call? The men are here Music Department wants your O K

C F Trumpets?

MISS CREWS For Young England

C F Look here—I haven't time to listen to them now Come back here at two o'clock And give it to me from out there I don't want them blasting in my ear (Meanwhile BENSON and LAW have been in whispered conference)

MISS CREWS Yes, Mr Friday (Exits)

C F Now, boys—let's get together on this (*Turns on SUSIE from below desk*) And you—what are you sitting here for? Get out! (*SUSIE tries to rise*)

IAW Sit right where you are (*Crosses to front of desk*) Don't you bark at our inspiration! We've got it!

C F What?

LAW (*with mounting excitement*) A baby!

C F Boys, I'm a patient man, but you're trying me

BENSON (*awed*) Larry Toms and a baby!

LAW (*to C F*) Do you see it?

LARRY (*bellowing*) Wait a minute—wait a minute!

LAW (*quickly*) He finds a baby—in the Rockies—

BENSON (*inspired, quickly to C F*) Girl with a no-good gambler—out of Las Vegas—has a baby gambler is killed Girl leaves baby on the ranger's door step Larry is the ranger

LAW (*dramatizing it all*) My God, he says—a baby!

BENSON (*awed*) A baby!

LAW The most precious thing in life The cutest, God-damn little bastard you ever saw

BENSON Tugging at every mother's heart And every potential mother

LAW And who isn't?

BENSON. A love story between Larry and the baby—

LAW The two outcasts! Get it?

BENSON And then he meets the mother!

LAW She wants her baby back

BENSON She's been through the fires of hell

LAW The man she loved let her down

BENSON She hates men all men

LAW She won't look at Larry

BENSON (to LARRY) No There she sits bitter, brooding, cynical, but underneath—a mother's heart

LAW Out on the Rockies—

BENSON The hell with the Rockies—back to the Foreign Legion!

LAW Right! Larry's joined to forget He's out on the march We can use all that stock stuff—and he finds a baby!

BENSON He's gone off to fight the Riffs

LAW The hell with the Riffs! Ethiopians!

BENSON Stick to the Riffs We don't want any race problem

LAW Right! She doesn't know if he's coming back

BENSON She's waiting—waiting!

LAW We cut to the Riffs—

BENSON Cut back—

LAW (to BENSON) Right into the battle

BENSON (really inspired now) His father's the Colonel!

LAW Talk about Kipling—

BENSON Talk about scope—sweep—what a set-up!

LAW A love story!

BENSON A great love story!

LAW Mary Magdalen of the Foreign Legion and the West Point man who wanted to forget!

BENSON (rises) The baby brings them together, splits them apart, brings them together—

LAW Boy meets girl—

BENSON Boy loses girl—

LAW Boy gets girl!

C F (rising in excitement) Boys, I think you've got something! Let's go up and try it on B K while it's hot

LAW Let's go! (They move forward)

LARRY (crosses to behind couch) Wait a minute—you can't act with a baby They steal every scene— Look what happened to Chevalier

LAW Are you selling motherhood short? (LAW, BENSON and C F exit through next speech)

LARRY They'll be looking at the baby when they should be looking at me I tell you—I won't play it (Follows off SUSIE tries to rise, now she is left alone She sits down again RODNEY, in the Coldstream Guards uniform, enters SUSIE turns)

RODNEY Oh, I'm sorry I hope I didn't startle you

SUSIE Oh, no (Then, as he looks at C F's desk) They all stepped out and they didn't even touch their lunch

RODNEY (licking his lips involuntarily) Lunch?— You don't happen to know when Mr Friday is coming back?

SUSIE No, I don't

RODNEY I did want to see him It's rather urgent Do you mind if I wait here?

SUSIE No, of course not (He seats himself on couch, near a tray There is an awkward silence SUSIE stares straight ahead RODNEY plays with a cracker Finally SUSIE breaks the silence) What are you supposed to be?

RODNEY Eh? Oh! That's just it I'm supposed to be a Buckingham Palace Guard, sergeant major— (He pops the cracker into his mouth and swallows it SUSIE looks at him rather intently) Good Lord! What am I doing?

SUSIE You're eating Mr Friday's cracker

RODNEY I'm awfully sorry I don't understand how I—

SUSIE You must be very hungry

RODNEY Not a bit Not at all

SUSIE You look hungry

RODNEY Do I?

SUSIE Why don't you have something? They'll never eat it They're always sending things back they order—never even touched

RODNEY Really?

SUSIE You'll only be doing me a favor

RODNEY Oh?

SUSIE I won't have so much to carry back to the commissary Sometimes I think I carry back more than I bring

RODNEY You're pulling my leg, of course

SUSIE What did you say?

RODNEY You're not really a waitress

SUSIE Sure I am

RODNEY (triumphantly) Waitresses don't usually sit in producers' offices

SUSIE They do when they don't feel well

RODNEY You don't feel well? Oh, I'm sorry Is there anything I can do?

SUSIE No, thanks

RODNEY But what's wrong?

SUSIE Oh, there's no use telling you I told Mr Friday and he made such a fuss about it I guess I better keep it to myself

RODNEY I'm afraid I don't quite understand

SUSIE Try the chicken soup It's very good

RODNEY Are you seriously suggesting that I filch some of this broth?

SUSIE We make it special for B K with nine chickens

RODNEY Well, dash it, I will eat it just to make the joke good! *(He laughs weakly and picks up the bowl and puts it to his lips, and sips it)*

SUSIE *(warningly)* It's hot!

RODNEY *(now quite gay)* So I've learned

SUSIE When did you eat last?

RODNEY *(lying, of course)* I had my lunch an hour ago

SUSIE Have some crackers with it

RODNEY Thanks

SUSIE You're English, aren't you?

RODNEY Yes, of course

SUSIE So is Ronald Colman

RODNEY *(bolting his food)* So he is

SUSIE I like the way the English talk

RODNEY Do you?

SUSIE It's very soothing

RODNEY What an idea!

SUSIE. Of course, that's only my idea I'm very ignorant

RODNEY Oh, please don't say that I think you're very intelligent

SUSIE Oh, I'm intelligent But I don't know anything

RODNEY You're an extraordinary girl

SUSIE I've never been to high school

RODNEY *(gallantly)* May I say that's the high school's loss?

SUSIE But some day I'll go to high school That's my secret ambition Try the ham hocks The cook eats them himself He comes from Czechoslovakia

RODNEY Does he really? Look here—I feel an awful swine guzzling by myself Won't you join me?

SUSIE Well, I'm not very hungry, but I can eat

RODNEY Good! *(He rises and adjusts a chair for her)*

SUSIE It's funny how I keep on eating

RODNEY Some ham hocks?

SUSIE No Happy doesn't like ham He likes milk

RODNEY *(mystified)* I beg your pardon? *(But he doesn't press the point)* Did you say milk?

SUSIE Yes Milk

RODNEY *(as he pours)* There you are

SUSIE Thanks

RODNEY Cozy, this—what?

SUSIE It's good milk Have some

RODNEY Do you know, I think you're the most extraordinary girl I ever met

SUSIE Why?

RODNEY You're so kind You're so direct, so sincere Most girls one meets play about with words so They're so infernally smart They make one feel like a worm

SUSIE Of course, I'm different on account of my condition Most girls aren't in my condition

RODNEY Your condition?

SUSIE The minute I found out about Happy I said to myself I'm going to be very good and very sincere, because then Happy will be very good and very sincere

RODNEY I'm afraid I don't quite follow

SUSIE (*sighing*) Nobody does

RODNEY Eh? Oh, yes As I was saying— What was I saying?

SUSIE (*looking into his eyes and feeling strangely stirred*) Have some mustard

RODNEY Do you know, I must confess I was hungry As a matter of fact, I was close to wiring home for funds today But I didn't (*Looks very determined, righteous*)

SUSIE You mean you need money, and you can get it—and you won't wire for it?

RODNEY I can't—and keep my pride I told *them* I was on my own You see, my family didn't want me to act Not that they've any prejudices against the stage—or the films Not at all In fact, one of my aunts was a Gaiety girl Quite all right But they don't think I *can* act That's what hurts

SUSIE Can you act?

RODNEY No

SUSIE Not at all?

RODNEY Not at all I'm awful!

SUSIE Oh, that's too bad

RODNEY But I only realized it in the stock company out in Pasadena I was the worst member of the company At first I thought it was because they were always giving me character parts—American gangsters—and that sort of thing And then one week I played a Cambridge undergraduate And, mind you, I've been a Cambridge undergraduate And do you know that I was utterly unconvincing?

SUSIE Then why don't you give it up?

RODNEY Pride

SUSIE I can understand that—Pride

RODNEY Can you really?

SUSIE Sure I can

RODNEY That's why I simply must see Mr Friday (*Suddenly*) Look here— (*He takes a book from couch and opens it*) Look at this color plate Does this uniform remotely resemble the one I'm wearing? (*He crosses down right*)

SUSIE (*looks at book, then at RODNEY*) Yes, I think so

RODNEY (*crosses to her left*) But, my dear girl, look at the coat and the buttons—and the boots—note the heels—and look at mine (*Steps back*)

SUSIE Well, come to think of it, I guess it is different

RODNEY Of course And I've taken this book right out of their own research department When I show this to Mr Friday he's bound to be sporty enough to admit an error

SUSIE Oh, sure

RODNEY (*leaning over her*) You see, all I want is to appear in *one* picture—and then I can tell the family "I've done it But it's not good enough I'm chucking it" But I'll have my pride

SUSIE (*gazing at him*) I see

RODNEY Oh I say I'm not boring you?

SUSIE Oh, no Finish your ham

RODNEY Eh! Oh! Don't mind if I do A bit of pie for you? (*He extends plate with fork*)

SUSIE (*brightly Almost flirting*) Well, I'll try (*She smiles at him and he at her, fork poised in mid-air*)

RODNEY Do you know, I've never enjoyed a lunch quite as much as this one—thanks to you (*Suddenly*) Would it bore you if I tried out my lines—in *Young England*, you know?

SUSIE Oh, no

RODNEY Very well (*He rises, holding glass of milk*) Gentlemen, the Queen— (*He waits*)

SUSIE Is that all?

RODNEY That's all But of course I could say "Gentlemen, I give you the Queen" Fatten up the part a bit, what? Gentlemen, I give you the Queen! Sounds rather better, doesn't it? (*Then with profound bass*) Gentlemen, I give you the Queen! (*LARRY enters followed by C F C F stares*)

LARRY I don't cotton to the whole idea, and if B K's got any sense, he won't listen to those maniacs

C F What's going on here?

RODNEY How'd you do I . . . I (*Puts glass of milk back on tray*)

C F What is this? A tête-à-tête in my office! Good Gad! You've been drinking my milk!

SUSIE It's all right, Mr Friday I told him he could have it

C F You told him?

RODNEY I'm awfully sorry. I owe you an apology, and money, of course Will you accept my IOU? And I have the book—from Research I can show you the really authentic uni-

form I'm sure if you study this—
(SUSIE finds the page and hands book
to RODNEY)

C F I've a good mind to call the
studio police

SUSIE (rises) Oh, please don't do
that, Mr Friday

LARRY That's what you get for hav-
ing foreign actors around Take the
food right out of your mouth!

RODNEY I'm terribly sorry, of course

C F Get out!

RODNEY I realize there's nothing I
can say— (He turns to SUSIE) except
—my eternal gratitude (He grabs
her by the hand and shakes it Exits)

SUSIE Oh, you shouldn't have done
that He's been having a terrible
time

C F (glaring at SUSIE) Get these
dishes out of here

SUSIE (meekly) Yes, sir (She be-
gins piling up dishes on tray)

LARRY The idea of a baby! The more
I think of it, the less I like it

C F (crosses to chair at desk) Larry,
you're driving me into a nervous
breakdown I had to take you out of
B K's office so you'd stop arguing be-
fore he could make a decision

LARRY There's nothing to decision
I won't play it

C F If B K likes the idea, you'll play
it

LARRY Maybe—and maybe not I'm
willing to bet ten to one right now

B K kicks the whole story in the
ash can He's no fool (BENSON and
LAW enter in shirt sleeves They've
obviously had a hot session with
B K)

BENSON Sold! Lock, stock and baby!
B K says it's the best mother-love
story he's heard in years

LARRY What? What's that?

LAW (magnificently) Susie, put that
tray down!

SUSIE Please, Mr Law, I've got to
get back to the commissary

LARRY You sold him that story, huh?

BENSON Lie down, actor!

LARRY I'll see about this (He exits)

BENSON Now listen, Susie—and lis-
ten carefully

LAW Let me tell her, will you? (He
faces her) Susie, nature meant you
for a sucker You were designed to
get the short end of the stick The girl
who gets slapped

BENSON (quickly) But we're chang-
ing all that

LAW Susie, in real life, you'd have
your baby in the County Hospital
get yourself a job, if lucky, with
a philanthropic Iowa family of four-
teen adults and twelve minors for
twenty bucks a month And when
your grateful son grew up he'd squirt
tobacco juice in your eye and join the
Navy

BENSON There you go with your
God-damn realism (Turns to SUSIE
with paper and pencil) Sign, please—

SUSIE Here? (*She signs, and then turns, brightly*) What is it?

BENSON Just a power of attorney authorizing us to deal for you in all matters with this studio

C F What power of attorney? What are you boys up to?

LAW We said to ourselves upstairs—why shouldn't Susie have the good things of life?

BENSON After all, we're godfathers

SUSIE I—I don't feel very good

LAW Get this, Susie We've just sold a story about a baby

BENSON Sweetest story ever told!

LAW A new-born baby

BENSON Brand new

LAW We're going to watch that baby—the first hair—the first tooth—the first smile—

BENSON The same baby No switching—first time in the history of pictures That baby's going to grow up before your eyes

LAW Open up like a flower
Just like the Dionne quintuplets

BENSON Minute he's born we set the cameras on him We stay with him—

LAW That baby's going to gurgle and goggle and drool his way to stardom!

SUSIE But—

LAW And that baby, Susie, is Happy Upstairs in B K's office we put your unborn child into pictures!

SUSIE (*transported*) Happy—in pictures! Oh—that's wonderful—(*Then, with a sudden gasp*) Oh!

LAW (*quickly*) Susie! What's the matter?

SUSIE I don't know I I
I don't feel so good I
think I (*In these broken words, SUSIE tells all BENSON helps SUSIE to lie on couch LAW looks over SUSIE's shoulder, whistles, runs to phone*)

LAW (*into phone*) Emergency! Get the ambulance over to Mr Friday's office right away—get the doctor—get the nurse

C F (*staring*) What is it? In my office Good Gad! Miss Crews! (*Door opens*)

MISS CREWS (*at door*) The trumpet are here!
(*Trumpets sound their triumphant clarion call*)

LAW (*through the Wagnerian brass, to BENSON, awed*) Happy's on his way!

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE I

We are in your neighborhood theatre, seven months later

As the curtain rises we face a motion-picture screen, and to the sound-track accompaniment of "Home on the Range," these glaring titles pop out at us:

IF YOU LIKED HAPPY
IN
"WANDERING HEARTS"
YOU'LL ADORE HIM
IN
"GOLDEN NUGGET"

This is what is known as a trailer, in technical terms. It is shown at neighborhood theatres prior to the release of the picture so that the customers will be teased into returning the following week.

There are, of course, beautifully composed shots of horses, men and open spaces, and finally we come upon a series of close-ups of HAPPY, over which these titles dance.

HAPPY!
HAPPY!
HAPPY!

The sound track blares forth "Ride of the Valkyries."

CROWN PRINCE OF COMEDY!
KING OF TRAGEDY!
EMPEROR OF EMOTION!

Just prior to these titles we have seen a Chinese, who has emerged from God knows where, but what is a ranch without a Chinese? The general idea is that the Chinese finds HAPPY on the doorstep and communicates his discovery to LARRY TOMS. There follows a title which explains all.

THE DESERT WAIF WHO MADE
A SOFTIE OF A BAD MAN

The picture is further described as

THE BIG GOLD STRIKE!
OF MOTHER LOVE

We see horses galloping, men falling, revolvers barking, and nice, big, wary

THRILLS

CHILLS

The credit card is as follows

FROM A STORY BY H G WELLS

ADAPTED BY J CARLYLE BENSON AND ROBERT LAW

DIRECTED BY SERGE BORODOKOV

and, appropriately enough, in solitary grandeur

PRODUCED BY C ELLIOT FRIDAY

SCENE II

The screen lifts, and once more we are in MR FRIDAY's office

C F is at his desk, MISS CREWS is seated upstage and at desk, BENSON is on the couch beside LARRY ROSETTI is seated on the piano bench

BENSON Read those figures, Miss Crews

MISS CREWS Eighty-two thousand at the Music Hall Forty-eight thousand five hundred and thirty-eight in Des Moines

BENSON Without a stage show

LARRY I always went big in Des Moines

MISS CREWS Twenty-eight thousand in Newark

LARRY That's one of my big towns

MISS CREWS Forty-two thousand three hundred and eighty-four in San Francisco

LARRY I'm big there, too-

MISS CREWS Twenty-six thousand eight hundred and seventy-five in Detroit

BENSON (to C F) And you sit there and tell me Happy isn't worth thirty-five hundred a week?

C F But, Benson, be reasonable I can't go to B K with any such fantastic figure

BENSON (sighing) Read that list again, Miss Crews

C F Never mind, Miss Crews

LARRY What about me? *Wandering Hearts* was my picture, wasn't it? Folks came to see me They didn't come to see Happy

BENSON (taking "Variety" from his pocket) Let me read "Variety" to

the assembled multitude *Wandering Hearts* socko in Minneapolis despite Larry Toms

LARRY Huh?

BENSON Mexico nuts about Happy but no like Larry Toms—

LARRY Where? Where does it say that? (*He takes paper ROSETTI rises and looks over LARRY's shoulder*)

BENSON This is an accidental business in an accidental world Happy is going to get it while it's hot

C F Benson, you owe me something

BENSON What?

C F Gratitude After all, the idea of a baby was mine—more or less

BENSON More or less

C F I made that baby act

BENSON All right, Svengali

C F Shall we say three hundred a week for Happy?

BENSON Shall we say thirty-five hundred a week for Happy?

C F I've a good mind to have you thrown out of this studio

BENSON All right Happy goes with us We've still got that power of attorney

C F Of course, I didn't mean that literally

BENSON I did (*Telephone rings*)

C F Hello Yes, Miss Goodwin What? You can't write about

Brussels because you've never been there? My dear girl, why do you think we have a research department? After all, Bernard Shaw wrote *Don Juan* and he never went to Bulgaria Imagination, my dear girl—imagination (*Hangs up*) Look here Benson, I knew I couldn't deal with Law I thought I could with you After all, you're in no position to antagonize this studio Some day you may need my friendship

BENSON I'm supposed to be working with our Mr Law on a story To wit *Tiger Tamer* Do you mind if I join my partner in a little English composition?

C F Some day you may be very sorry for this, Benson

BENSON What do you think, Miss Crews

MISS CREWS I think Happy ought to get it while it's hot

C F Get back to your desk

MISS CREWS Yes, Mr Friday (*She exits*)

LARRY (*waving "Variety"*) I said that baby'd ruin me! Well, he ain't going to steal no more pictures! I won't play that new scene

C F (*irritably*) What new scene?

LARRY I'm supposed to wash Happy

C F That's a cute scene I read it

LARRY Am I the type that washes babies?

C F Why not?

LARRY 'Tain't manly!

BENSON No You want the baby to wash you!

LARRY Listen!

BENSON Any further business before the house? (*Turns to LARRY*) By the way, I saw you with Susie at the Trocadero last night We don't approve of you as an escort Remind me to speak to her about that

C F Benson, I'm asking you once more Be fair—be reasonable

BENSON I am We're asking thirty-five hundred a week We'll consider three thousand and settle for twenty-five hundred But not a penny less Incidentally, Fox'll pay twenty-five hundred for Happy We promised to let them know by Saturday No hurry, of course (*Exits*)

C F Have you ever seen anything more damnably unfair? Imagine writers holding up this studio at the point of a gun It's nothing but blackmail

ROSETTI (*rises*) I've got a hunch, C F When did you sign Happy? Do you remember?

C F Of course I remember July fourteenth Fall of the Bastille I remember my wife pointing out the coincidence at the time Why?

ROSETTI (*crosses to desk*) I've got a hunch that power of attorney expires pretty soon I want to be prepared

C F Rosetti, I'm not interested in the future I'm interested in signing Happy right now—before we lose him to Fox (*Phone rings*)

ROSETTI You've got to have vision in this business, C F (*He reaches for other phone, changes his mind, and then exits*)

C F (*into phone*) Hello Yes, listen, Gregg I ran the sound track on *Young England* last night I don't like the trumpets They're sour They spoil the whole mood What? What's that? You can't walk out on a picture like that What kind of a director are you if you can't take constructive criticism hello hello (*Hangs up*) Gregg is walking out on *Young England*, I can't sign Happy—

LARRY What about me?

C F Ten thousand feet of film sick—and he walks out I'll have to run the picture all the afternoon and sit up all night cutting it (*MISS CREWS enters*)

MISS CREWS Happy's through for the day

NURSE (*wheeling in a streamlined baby carriage*) Through for the day

DOCTOR (*as he enters*) Through for the day Is his mother here?

MISS CREWS No, Doctor, but she should be here very soon

NURSE (*backing carriage in front of desk*) Say da-da to Mr Friday

C F (*waving obediently*) Da-da, Happy

DOCTOR Nurse, take the little trouper out into the garden and keep him in the sunshine

LARRY He's through for the day and I'm working until eight He's sure got it soft

(NURSE exits with HAPPY ROSETTI enters)

DOCTOR They've been overworking you, have they?

LARRY I ain't feeling so hearty, doc I wish you'd look me over

C F (rises and goes below desk) Just your imagination I wish I had your constitution I've got to see B K (He exits)

DOCTOR All you picture people are hypochondriacs However, come up to my office and I'll look you over (He exits)

LARRY I'm a star I've been a star for ten years I've worked hard to get where I'm at— (He rises Phone rings)

ROSETTI (at phone) Hello
Yes speaking—

LARRY I don't drink I don't smoke I don't swear I don't get into no scandal And the girls I passed up!

ROSETTI (into phone) Oh, you've got that, Mr Williams? Fine When does it expire? It *did* expire? Last week? No, don't do that I'll tell the boys You see, I may be handling Happy's new contract Right (He hangs up)

LARRY They ain't making pictures here no more They're shooting nothing but close-ups of babies Happy laughing! Happy crying! Happy! Happy!

ROSETTI Larry, I've just checked with the Legal Department The boys' power of attorney expired last week And they don't even know it

LARRY What's that got to do with me?

ROSETTI Larry, there's been something developing in the back of my mind for some weeks Why do you think I asked you to take Susie to the Trocadero?

LARRY She talked me deaf, dumb, and blind about going to high school Set me back fourteen bucks Lucky she don't drink

ROSETTI (the dreamer) I wanted you to get friendly with her because I visualized a way for you and me to get Happy—for life

LARRY Huh?

ROSETTI (with Napoleonic intensity) Larry, here's the tactical move You marry Susie

LARRY Marry her?

ROSETTI That's what I said

LARRY I won't do it

ROSETTI (who knows his client) All right, suit yourself

LARRY We got community property in California If there's a bust-up the woman gets half

ROSETTI Larry, I don't want to hurt your feelings, but I can't get you a new contract the way things are now B K is dickering to borrow Clark Gable or Gary Cooper for Happy's next picture

LARRY (*touched to the quack*)
What?

ROSETTI I'd marry her myself if I was free Show me a girl with a better heart—with more culture—

LARRY You don't expect me to believe what the studio hands out—her husband was a prominent portrait painter who went down on the *Morro Castle*?

ROSETTI (*indignantly*) Who are you to cast the first stone?

LARRY I don't want to marry nobody Anyway, there's no sense to it

ROSETTI (*patiently*) If you marry her, you're Happy's legal guardian and we control the situation A father and son team off the screen as well as on! Is that practical or am I just an idealist? Look at Guy Lathrop! He argued with me when I told him to marry Betty Bird But he finally had the sense to play along with me and we've been drawing top money ever since

LARRY I don't want to marry nobody

ROSETTI Larry, you're at the crossroads right now One road leads to stardom and big pictures, with Happy and me The other leads to Poverty Row and cheap Westerns Will you put your hand in mine and let me guide you?
(MISS CREWS enters)

MISS CREWS Mr Toms, you're wanted on the set

LARRY (*growling*) All right

MISS CREWS Oh, hello, Mrs Seabrook how nice you look (*For*

SUSIE enters *She wears a white middy blouse and a navy blue, pleated skirt*)

SUSIE We had gym today Hello, Larry Hello, Mr Rosetti I hope I didn't interrupt anything important

ROSETTI Not at all. (*Significantly*) I'll be in the Legal Department, Larry (*He exits*)

SUSIE Where's Happy?

MISS CREWS Happy's in the garden with his nurse He's all through for the day

SUSIE Oh, that's wonderful I don't get to see him very much He's working and I'm going to high school (*CHAUFFEUR enters*)

CHAUFFEUR Excuse me, Miss

SUSIE What is it, Simpson?

CHAUFFEUR You forgot your algebra book, Miss

SUSIE Oh, thank you, Simpson That was very thoughtful (*CHAUFFEUR exits*)

MISS CREWS And I have a new batch of fan mail for you and Happy (*Exits*)

SUSIE It's wonderful to get mail Nobody used to write me before Now I even get letters from Japan (*MISS CREWS enters with letters*) All those letters? Thank you, Miss Crews

LARRY (*sighs*) Miss Crews, call the set and tell 'em I may be a little late

MISS CREWS Very well (*She exits*)

SUSIE (*sitting on desk, poring over her hand-written, moronic literature*) Here's one from North Carolina Oh, the poor thing! There's so much sadness in this world (LARRY sighs, she looks up at him) You look sad, too, Larry What's the matter?

LARRY Well—(*He rises and crosses to SUSIE*)—uh—I been waiting a long time to talk to you, Susie I couldn't go to the high school All those girls would mob me for autographs, especially when I tell them who I am

SUSIE All the girls are crazy about Clark Gable

LARRY (*clears his throat*) Susie—I can get two tickets for the opening at the Chinese—the de Mille picture

SUSIE Can you?

LARRY I knew that'd knock you over

SUSIE Oh, it'll be wonderful

LARRY I'm always thinkin' of little things to make life wonderful—for you

SUSIE (*nods*) Everybody is

LARRY (*bridling*) What do you mean—everybody?

SUSIE Only the other day Mr Benson said something very true He said "Susie, you're Cinderella" And that's just what I feel like And you know what else he said? He said "All you need now is a Prince Charming"

LARRY He did, huh? Who did he have in mind?

SUSIE Oh, nobody

LARRY He didn't mention me, did he?

SUSIE Oh, no (LARRY grunts) Of course, I've never met a Prince Charming I wouldn't know what he looks like Although, one day an awful nice boy came in here

LARRY Who?

SUSIE I don't even know his name He was in uniform and I was in my condition—I've never seen him since

LARRY You shouldn't be thinking of him You should be thinking of Happy

SUSIE But I do only sometimes it gets lonesome for me, especially at night And of course, Mr Benson and Mr Law are busy all the time Happy used to say good night to them on the telephone Not really good night—just goo-n'—just like that But they're so busy they won't come to the telephone any more

LARRY Happy needs a father

SUSIE Do you think so?

LARRY Well, you want him to be able to look the whole world in the face, don't you?

SUSIE (*twinkling*) He does!

LARRY I mean when he grows up He's gonna be ashamed when he finds out he never had a father

SUSIE Of course he had a father

LARRY I mean—a married father

SUSIE He was married—but I didn't know it
(LARRY winces)

LARRY Uh — listen, Susie — I'm mighty fond of you and Happy (He tries playing the bashful Western hero) Mighty fond

SUSIE Are you really, Larry?

LARRY Mighty fond

SUSIE Who would have thought six months ago that I'd be sitting in the same room with Larry Toms and he'd be saying to me he was—

LARRY Mighty fond

SUSIE Do you know something very odd? When I first came to California, it was raining very hard—oh, it rained for three weeks—it was very unusual—and I was looking for a job, and I couldn't find one—and I had fifteen cents—and I just had to get out of the rain—and I went into a theatre and there you were—on the screen—

LARRY Mighty fond—

SUSIE (awed) That's just what you were saying to Mary Brian—and now you're saying it to me

LARRY What was the picture?

SUSIE *Thunder over Arizona* It was a beautiful picture. I don't remember what it was about, but I saw it four times. Until I got dry

LARRY Susie, soon's this picture's over, how'd you like to come up to my ranch? You and Happy—

SUSIE (rises) Ranch? Oh, that would be lovely! Maybe Mr. Benson and Mr. Law could come, too?

LARRY Maybe they could, but they won't

SUSIE But I couldn't go alone—without a chaperon

LARRY Susie—you and Happy'll love that ranch. I got a mighty nice house, big and rambling. I got plenty of barns and a corral and plenty of livestock. But no baby

SUSIE I know Happy'll just love it

LARRY Susie—I know you don't expect this, and I don't want you to get too excited—but, Susie, I been thinkin' about you and Happy—thinkin' a lot. Ever since the day you come into this office and fell on that there floor, I said to myself, Larry, there's your leadin' lady—for life

SUSIE Me?

LARRY Nobody else

SUSIE But I don't—you won't get mad?—but I'm not in love with you

LARRY You shouldn't be thinking of yourself—I'm not thinking of myself—you should be thinking of Happy

SUSIE I guess you're right. I don't know what to say. (Pauses) I'll ask Mr. Benson and Mr. Law—

LARRY Huh?

SUSIE They've been so good to me

LARRY I'm not proposing to them!

SUSIE I know, but—

LARRY You don't mean nothing to them Before you came along they had a Spanish snake charmer until they got tired of her And before that they had a broken-down pug who wiggled his ears They was groomin' him for my place There ain't nothin' holy to them!

SUSIE But they've done everything for me

LARRY (*crosses to SUSIE*) I'm offering you my ranch—my name—and a father Happy'll be proud of!

SUSIE I know, but—

LARRY Don't give me your answer now Think it over (*Pats her arm*) Only don't think too long I'll be waiting for your answer in the Legal Department You know where that is?

SUSIE Oh, yes
(MISS CREWS *opens the door*)

LARRY I'll be there (*He exits* SUSIE *looks a little dazed*)

MISS CREWS Oh, Mrs Seabrook—I've located that young man you were looking for He's outside

SUSIE Oh, you have? Really?

MISS CREWS (*at door*) Come in
(SUSIE *tenses herself* A strange
YOUNG MAN *enters and stops*)

SUSIE (*staring at him*) Oh! Oh, no, that's not him—I mean—he

YOUNG MAN (*earnestly*) Won't I do? I've just finished a short for Hal Roach—I'm making a test for Metro tomorrow, and—

MISS CREWS (*firmly escorting him out*) Thank you for coming! (YOUNG MAN *shrugs and exits*, and MISS CREWS *closes the door*)

SUSIE He's not English

MISS CREWS English? We didn't have any English actors in Young England

SUSIE This boy was an extra

MISS CREWS Does he owe you a lot of money?

SUSIE Oh, no It was nothing like that

MISS CREWS (*as it dawns on her*) Oh, I see! A personal matter! Well, I'll try again (*Brightly*)

SUSIE I guess it's no use, Miss Crews (*Sighs*) He probably swallowed his pride and went back to England
(BENSON and LAW *enter* BENSON *carries paper and pencil* BENSON *sits upstage end of desk* LAW *crosses to front of couch*)

LAW Hi, Susie! How's the little mother? Clear out We're trying to work and a hundred chorus boys are practicing fencing underneath our windows (*Turns to* MISS CREWS) Miss Crews, leave a note for C.F. He's got to change our office We can't work with fencing faines! (*Sits on couch*)

MISS CREWS Yes, Mr Law (*She exits*)

SUSIE Are you very busy?

BENSON We still need an opening

LAW Fade-in . A zoo!

SUSIE (*crossing to BENSON*) I just wanted to thank you, Mr Benson, for the beautiful white teddy bear

BENSON What teddy bear?

SUSIE Mrs Benson brought it her self

BENSON (*looking up from type-writer*) Oh, she did?

SUSIE She played with Happy, too And even after he went for his nap, she stayed and looked at him

BENSON (*to LAW—covering*) Where were we?

SUSIE When she left, she was crying I think she ought to have a baby of her own

BENSON (*angered*) Come on, Law—come on—fade-in on the zoo

LAW I've got it! Larry's carrying a hunk of meat for his pet tiger He's crossing the road Bang! The dame comes tearing down ninety miles an hour

BENSON Give her a little character

LAW She's a high-handed rich bitch Bang! She almost runs the bastard down Where the hell do you think you're going? She burns Society girl She's never been talked to like that before Why, you lousy bum, she snarls Listen, here's a cute piece of business She bawls the hell out of him and he throws the hunk of meat right in her puss!

BENSON (*enthusiastically*). That's charming!

LAW Listen, Susie, what are you standing there for? Go home and write in your diary

SUSIE Boys, I wanted to ask you something

BENSON Fade-out!

LAW Fade-in!

SUSIE and then I'll go

LAW (*wearily*) What is it?

SUSIE Do you think I should marry Larry Toms?

LAW Who?

SUSIE Larry Toms

LAW (*rises, crosses below couch*) No Fade-in

BENSON Better get a different background We've been staying in the zoo too long

LAW Right! Girl's home—a Pan shot—fifteen hundred butlers with white socks (*Turns to susie*) Did he ask you to marry him?

SUSIE Yes

LAW Did you spit in his face?

SUSIE He's taking me to the opening tonight He says he's mighty fond of Happy and me

LAW (*crosses to back of couch*) Why shouldn't he be? His contract depends on it Even Wilkes Barre doesn't want him and they're still calling for Theda Bara—

SUSIE Don't you think he'd be good for Happy? He's an outdoor man

LAW So is the fellow who collects my garbage

BENSON Listen, let's get on with this Introducing the fiancé A pale anemic louse A business man!

LAW Right! The minute the audience sees him they yell Don't marry that heel

SUSIE I know you're very busy . .

LAW Go away, Susie

SUSIE You boys were so sweet to me I felt I had somebody But lately I've been awfully alone

LAW Sure! Everybody's alone What do you think life is? Why do you have crowds? Because everybody's alone (*Stops, crosses above couch to front*) That's a thought That's what I should be writing instead of this titivating drivel Life as it is People as they are

SUSIE But that would be terrible You don't know, Mr Law, you don't know how awful life can be

BENSON When you philosophers are through I'd like to get on with this story

SUSIE (*eagerly, to BENSON*) You wouldn't like to come out and say hello to Happy? He's in the garden (*LAW waves her away, crosses and sits on couch SUSIE is quite defeated now*)

BENSON (*ignoring her*) I've got it (*To SUSIE*) Don't bother me! (*SUSIE crosses to desk, gets mail, and fades from the scene*) I've got it! Introducing Happy! Back to the zoo—Larry gets up in the morning and there,

curled up with his pet tiger cub, is a baby! Happy!

LAW Not bad!

BENSON Larry looks at him "How'd you get here?" (*He mimics LARRY's voice*)

LAW The baby can't answer The tiger begins to growl Happy cries Larry takes the baby to his hut

BENSON We meet Larry's drunken pal, the comic (*Rises and crosses to LAW*) That's where we have swell business Two clumsy men pinning up his diapers—

LAW (*his enthusiasm gone*) Formula 284 Diapers gag

BENSON (*exulting*) Ah, yes, but the tiger runs away with the diapers! Fade-out! Now we need excitement. The tigers are loose—

LAW How did they get loose?

BENSON (*crosses to LAW*) The comic's drunk He opens the cages by accident Christ! I see it! The city in uproar—the police—National Guard—the girl's come down to the zoo—she's trapped with Larry—and the baby Fifty tigers snapping at Happy's throat

LAW And where does my priceless dialogue come in? (*Rises and crosses to chair back of desk*) That's the worst of back writing It's hard work

BENSON Suppose—Larry—thinks—it's—the girl's baby?

LAW Society girls go around leaving foundlings in the zoo? (*Drinking*) Prostitution of a God-given talent!

(Sis) Pasteboard pictures of pasteboard people

BENSON Will you shut up? I've got to get this line-up today Pearl expects me to take her to the opening

LAW (*fiddling with the dictograph*)
Eenie Meenie Mina Mo
(*Dictograph buzzes*) Music
Department?

GREEN'S VOICE Yes, this is the Music Department This is Mr Green

LAW (*mimics G F's voice*) Not Mr Green! This is C F can you write me a roundelay with a symphonic undertone in about fifteen minutes? Do it! (*Dictograph buzzes*) Yes?

GREEN'S VOICE Look, Mr Fnday, did you say a lullaby?

LAW No, I didn't say a lullaby I said a roundelay The sort of thing Beethoven dashes off (*He clicks the dictograph off* ROSETTI enters)

ROSETTI (*gemally*) Hello, boys have a cigar

LAW Hello, buzzard What's the occasion?

BENSON Fade-out, stooge, we're busy

ROSETTI Same old boys! Anything for a gag? Well, I'm feeling pretty good myself I've just set Larry to a long-term contract And he didn't have to take a cut, either I got him a nice little set-up A joint contract with Happy!

BENSON With Happy?

LAW (*rises*) Huh? You're crazy!

ROSETTI Well, the mother came to me just now and said you two were tired of her And I happened to look up your power of attorney, and it seems you didn't even care to get a new one when it expired

BENSON Is this on the level?

LAW Where's that power of attorney?

BENSON I thought you had it

LAW (*aghast*) What'd you get for Happy?

ROSETTI Three hundred!

LAW Why, we turned down fifteen hundred from Fox!

ROSETTI You should have taken it But three hundred's a lot of money Anyway, what's the difference? It's all in the family—now

LAW Where's Susie?

ROSETTI She went out with Larry They're going to the opening tonight They're celebrating

LAW Who thought this up—you?

ROSETTI Sure

LAW Why, you scavenging son of a—

ROSETTI You better be careful how you talk to me And you'd better be careful how you talk to Larry from now on He's fed up with your gags and insults You got away with a lot of stuff around here because you had Happy Well, Larry's got

him now, and he's going to have plenty to say around here I'm warning you He'd like to see you boys off this lot And he's in a position to do it—now So be careful If you want to keep your jobs (*Turns away to door*) And if I had a wife who was throwing my money away before I even made it, I'd be plenty careful

BENSON Why, you— (*ROSETTI exits quickly BENSON crosses to door, then turns to LAW*) Why the hell didn't you keep track of that power of attorney?

LAW Why didn't I?

BENSON Why the hell didn't you talk to Susie? She was in here

LAW Yeah

BENSON I see it—I see it now Larry --Rosetti—and we let her walk right into it Do you realize what this means? We're on our way out (*Crosses to piano*)

LAW That's fine

BENSON Fine?

LAW Now I'll have to go back to Vermont Now I'll have to write

BENSON Pearl doesn't like Vermont

LAW The whims of your wife don't interest me I've got a book—all planned

BENSON Listen—I want to stay in pictures I love pictures I'm knee-deep in debts We've got to bust this Larry thing wide open We've got to get Happy back

LAW But it's closed.

BENSON Well, what of it? We'll open it We've got to get Happy back

LAW How?

BENSON Suppose we get Larry Toms to break that joint contract

LAW All right—but how?

BENSON He's scared green of scandal Suppose we show up at the opening tonight with a drunken dame Larry's deserted wife!

LAW Has he got one?

BENSON We'll get one of your tarts.

LAW That's too damned obvious.

BENSON Can you top it?

LAW Let me think

BENSON How about a poor deserted mother? I'll bet he's got one

LAW (*rises, carried away*) I know! Happy's father!

BENSON Huh?

LAW We're going to produce Happy's father on the air—tonight (*Crosses to phone*)

BENSON Happy's father! That's swell! That's marvellous . . . (*Pause*) But where'll we get a father?

LAW (*into phone*) Central Casting, please Hello I want a handsome young extra, a gentleman, a little down at the heel, not too well

fed, neat business suit—shiny but well pressed, quiet manner
(*Door opens and RODNEY enters*)

BENSON What do you want?

RODNEY I received a message from Miss Crews but apparently she's stepped out. Is Mr. Friday here? I assume I've been called for a part.

LAW (*into phone, as his eyes refuse to leave RODNEY*) Never mind—cancel it. (*Hangs up*)

BENSON Will you shut the door, please? (*RODNEY complies*) So you're an actor, my boy? (*Paternalistically*)

RODNEY Of course, I haven't had much experience. As a matter of fact, I never appeared in a picture. I almost did. Since then I've been out of the profession, so to speak. Odd jobs—barbecue stand, and when that closed I offered to show tourists homes of the movie stars. Unfortunately I haven't a motor car and they won't walk. I don't mind saying this call was an extremely pleasant surprise.

LAW He's perfect!

RODNEY Do you really think I'll do?

LAW (*inspired*) Benson, take these lines
(*BENSON goes to chair*)

RODNEY Oh, are there lines? Then the fee will be fifteen dollars, I assume?

LAW Fifteen? One hundred for you

RODNEY I'm afraid I'm not worth that.

LAW This is a trailer we're making tonight. We pay more for trailers.

RODNEY Oh, I say!

BENSON (*at desk, with paper and pencil*) We're going to shoot this at Grauman's Chinese in the lobby. There'll be a girl at the microphone. Her name is Susie. You come running up—
you say.

LAW (*at downstage end of desk*) "Susie, why did you leave me?"
Say it.

RODNEY Susie, why did you leave me?

BENSON With feeling.

RODNEY (*with feeling*) Susie, why did you leave me?

LAW I'm Happy's father.

RODNEY I'm Happy's father.

BENSON Louder.

RODNEY I'm Happy's father.

LAW I did not go down on the Morro Castle. Susie, I've searched for you in the four corners of the earth.
Susie, why did you leave me?

RODNEY (*who has been repeating the ends of the phrases in LAW's speech*)
Susie, why did you leave me?

BENSON (*jubilant*) Right!

SCENE III

A radio voice is heard in the theatre before the rise of the curtain We're right in Grauman's Chinese Theatre in Hollywood

RADIO ANNOUNCER Folks, this is the première of Cecil B de Mille's super-spectacle of Egyptian life—*King Saul*—at Grauman's Chinese Your favorite stars, folks, in person—and the crowds They're pushing and shouting and yelling for autographs, but it's all in good-natured fun Only two hurt and they've refused medical treatment There's Constance Bennett, folks, with her husband, the

Marquis de la Falaise No, I'm wrong Sorry It's not the Marquis it's not Constance Bennett It's Mary Pickford By the way, I've been reading our Mary's book, folks She's selling God, folks, and that's some thing we all ought to be in the market for Give a thought to God and He'll give a thought to you That's the big lesson in *King Saul*, folks Oh, there's Leotta Marvin

As the curtain rises, the booming voice softens to the normal tone of a radio

Again we are in MR FRIDAY's office, later in the evening At the rise of the curtain, C F is seated with A CUTTER, and BENSON sits a little apart from him, in chair back of couch, near the radio, which is on

RADIO ANNOUNCER And if you've seen her on the screen, I don't have to tell you she's blonde, beautiful and gorgeous Folks, I want to tell you that this is the most thrilling première it's been my privilege to cover *King Saul*, de Mille's super-spectacle of Egyptian life at Grauman's Chinese—

C F Benson, turn down that radio We've got to get three thousand feet out of *Young England* It's a sick picture, Benson Where's Law? I left word at his hotel

BENSON He'll be here I'm inside man tonight He's outside

C F (to CUTTER) Cut the coronation scene—it drags And give me an

underlying something that means something I want a stirring Britanic quality
(**BENSON** turns up the radio)

RADIO ANNOUNCER And that, folks, was Mr Stanley Oswald, veteran of old silent films This is the première of *King Saul*, Cecil B de Mille's super-spectacle at Grauman's Chinese

C F Benson, turn to page 94 and read that scene I want to lap-dissolve through Queen Victoria Simmons, you're supposed to be a cutter Give me some ideas

RADIO ANNOUNCER And now, folks, I'm told that none other than Larry Toms is with us tonight And

he's not altogether by his lonesome for hanging on his manly arm is none other than Mrs Susan Seabrook, mother of America's Crown Prince—Happy!

BENSON Hooray!

CUTTER I got a way of cutting all that Boer War stuff so you won't even miss it

RADIO ANNOUNCER And now I have the honor to present Mrs Seabrook, the mother of Happy

C F Will you turn that infernal thing off? (To CUTTER) I can't cut the Boer War It's historically valuable

RADIO ANNOUNCER And now I have the honor to present Mrs Seabrook, the mother of Happy—

SUSIE'S VOICE But I don't know what to say!

BENSON Susie's on the air

RADIO ANNOUNCER Is it true, Mrs Seabrook, that you and Larry have been window shopping?

SUSIE'S VOICE (and it's very nervous indeed) Well—

RADIO ANNOUNCER The microphone is yours

SUSIE'S VOICE I would like to thank all of you for the thousands of letters and gifts that you've sent my baby Happy I read all your letters and some of them make me cry—they're so pathetic I would like to send all of you money only I haven't got that much and the studio won't let me I'd like to say a few words about the

letters asking about Happy's diet You read a lot of advertisements of what he eats but if Happy ate everything they said he ate I guess he'd be a giant, and he's really got a very little stomach

BENSON Good for Susie! Truth in advertising!

C F (struck by appalling thought) Benson, was Queen Victoria alive during the Boer War?

BENSON If she's alive in the picture, she was

RADIO ANNOUNCER (through this) Folks, this is the première of Cecil B de Mille's super-spectacle of Egyptian life, *King Saul*, at Grauman's Chinese—

SUSIE'S VOICE Can I say hello to all my girl friends at the Julia Marshall High School? Hello!

C F Benson—

BENSON Ssssh Susie's talking

SUSIE'S VOICE A lot of you wonder in your letters how a grown woman can go to high school Well, it's not easy I'm a mother, and the other girls aren't

BENSON Let's hope not

SUSIE'S VOICE (brightly) although some of the girls are very developed

RADIO ANNOUNCER (quickly) Folks, this is the première of *King Saul*, Cecil B de Mille's super-spectacle of Egyptian life

C F Shut that infernal thing off
(BENSON lifts hand like traffic signal
"Stop")

SUSIE'S VOICE I didn't finish I wanted to explain that I'm going to high school so I can keep up with Happy when he goes to college Because I'm the only one Happy can go to He hasn't got a father, and—

RADIO ANNOUNCER (very, very firmly) That was Happy's mother, folks . . . She was wearing a white evening gown And folks, meet Larry Toms, the lucky man

C F Benson, can we lap-dissolve through, do you think, on page 94?

LARRY'S VOICE I know this is going to be a wonderful picture

RADIO ANNOUNCER A little bird has whispered to me that you and Mrs Seabrook are contemplating marriage, Larry

BENSON Well, what do you know about that?

C F Will you come here, Benson, with that script?

LARRY'S VOICE Well, to tell you the truth—

BENSON He's blushing

LARRY'S VOICE I kinda missed the little fella after the day's work was done So I guess pretty soon I'll be Happy's father off the screen as well as on—

BENSON Who wrote his speech? You or Rosetti?

RODNEY'S VOICE Stop! I'm Happy's father!

C F (rises) What's that?

RODNEY'S VOICE I did not go down on the Morro Castle I've searched for you in the four corners of the earth Susie, why did you leave me?

C F (excitedly) Did you hear that?

BENSON (softly) Yes I wonder what that was
(Cries are heard of "Here, Officer"—articulate shouts—a siren)

RADIO ANNOUNCER Folks, there was a slight interruption That voice you heard was a young man he well, he threw his arms about Mrs Seabrook and kissed her There's some confusion—a police officer is making his way through—they've got the young man no, they haven't got him Folks, this is the opening of Cecil B de Mille's super-spectacle of Egyptian life, *King Saul*, at Grauman's Chinese
(BENSON turns it off)

C F (stunned) Good Gad! (Phone rings He moves to it)

BENSON (shakes his head) Strangest thing I ever heard

C F Oh, hello, B K Yes, I've just heard it over the radio (Miserable) I'm sitting here trying to cut *Young England* what? But, B K, yes, of course, it's a serious situation I agree with you yes, yes of course I'll get hold of the mother immediately (He rises, hangs up, still dazed To BENSON) B K's coming down to the studio! (Phone rings) Yes Look here, I've nothing to say to the press. It's a canard (He hangs up Phone rings again) I won't answer it
(MISS CREWS enters)

MISS CREWS. Doctor Tompkins is calling you, Mr Friday He says it's important

C F What's he want? I'm not in Call Mrs Seabrook's house and have her ring me the minute she comes in

MISS CREWS Yes, Mr Friday (*She exits*)

C F Benson, do you think that young man was genuine?

BENSON (*risés, crosses around down-stage end of couch*) Search me

C F Well, we'll soon find out B K's set the police after him

BENSON (*a little disturbed*) Why do that? Best thing the studio can do is ignore it

C F We can't ignore it This has brought up the whole paternity issue

BENSON What of it?

C F Suppose Happy has a skeleton in his closet?

BENSON (*lies on couch*) I don't even know if he's got a closet

C F Save your gags for your pictures They need them I've never heard B K so excited (*Crosses to window*) What do you think the reaction will be in the sticks—in the provinces? An illegitimate baby!

BENSON This is 1935

C F To me, yes But how many intellectuals have we in America?

BENSON One

C F You don't seem to realize—

BENSON Why, this is going to send Happy's stock up one hundred per cent From now on he's not only cute, he's romantic

C F He's illegitimate! I know America!

CUTTER (*studying the script*) What about Prince Albert? I can cut him out of the picture and you won't even miss him

C F (*crossing below desk*) Yes, yes, Simmons You go to the cutting room and do the best you know how (*SIMMONS rises and puts chair up against wall*) I've something more urgent right now (*Crosses to SIMMONS*) And, for God's sake, Simmons, get me some trumpets that sound like trumpets

CUTTER (*not gruffly, but politely*) You sure you don't mean a trombone, C F?

C F No I mean trumpets I'm not a musician but I know what I mean Trumpets—that slide (*He pantomimes a trombone, of course*)

BENSON (*to CUTTER*) He wants a slide trumpet (*CUTTER exits Simultaneously through other door GREEN and SLADE appear*)

GREEN Well, we've got that rounder lay

C F What do you want? What rounder delay? (*Phone rings*)

GREEN Park it, Otto (*Both go to piano*)

C F (at phone) Yes—yes—no, Mr Friday is not here He has nothing to say to the press (He hangs up)

GREEN You're going to be enthusiastic about this We've been up all night working on it (SLADE starts playing Beethoven's Turkish March As C F starts toward the piano, the phone rings) Smooth, ain't it?

C F (at phone) Miss Crews? Where's Mrs Seabrook? Why haven't you got her? (To GREEN) I will not listen to any more music

GREEN Get a load of this It's the real McCoy

C F (at phone) Yes—I'm holding the line—all night, never mind Call me (Hangs up To SLADE and GREEN) I'll call the studio guards if you don't stop that infernal din I'll report you to B K for insubordination I'll have your contracts torn up!

GREEN Are you kidding, or is this on the level?

C F Get out!

GREEN O K Don't get tough! Come on, Otto (Crosses back of couch to door) But it's a fine how-do-you-do when you call up a couple of artists late at night and put 'em to work going through Beethoven's symphonies for a little inspiration and then give them the bum's rush just because you ain't in the mood (GREEN and SLADE exit)
(LARRY and ROSETTI enter, both in tails and toppers)

ROSETTI Now calm down, Larry, calm down—

LARRY I'm not saying a word

C F Where's Mrs Seabrook? What did you do with her?

LARRY I don't know, and I don't care

BENSON (mockingly) "I kunda missed the little fella after the day's work was done—"

C F (quickly) Look here, Larry, I want to know what Susie said Did she know the young man? What did she say?

LARRY You listen to what I gotta say I ain't goin' to go through with no contract to play with no unbaptized baby!

ROSETTI (placatingly) Just a moment, Larry—

LARRY I'm through! (Overwhelmed with the memory) On the air—with all my fans listening in! I'm serving you notice now I ain't marrying her I ain't doing no more pictures with Happy

ROSETTI Larry, will you listen to reason?

LARRY There's only one thing you can do for me, Rosetti Get me a doctor I'm going up to my dressing room I need a sedative (LAW enters quietly)

BENSON Don't stand there Get him a doctor—

LAW Take me I'm a qualified veterinary
(ROSETTI exits with LARRY)

C F Law—
(BENSON sits up)

LAW Hello, C F I just got your message at the hotel *Young England* in trouble? Well, the old salvaging crew will pitch in (*Takes off his coat*)

C F Were you there?

LAW Where? At the opening? Yes Extraordinary, wasn't it?

BENSON (*significantly*) We heard it over the radio

LAW (*casually*) How'd it come over?

BENSON (*admiringly*) Clear as a bell!

LAW It certainly broke Larry up You should have seen our chivalrous hero running from the rescue Why, the wind whistled right past me!

C F Law, do you think that fellow was a crank, or do you think he was really—

LAW (*judicially*) Hard to say He had a sinister underlip

C F (*into phone*) Miss Crews, did you get Mrs Seabrook's house? No one answers? Someone *must* answer—she has a *ménage*! (*Hangs up Dictograph buzzes*) Hello?

B K's VOICE Look here, Friday

C F Yes, B K

B K's VOICE Did you get any dope on that young man?

C F No I can't get any information No one seems to know

B K's VOICE Why not? I ask you to do the simplest little thing and, as usual, you fall down on me

C F (*piteously*) Why blame me? I was sitting here cutting *Young England*

B K's VOICE Don't bother me with *Young England* You come up here—I want to talk with you

C F Yes, B K I'll be right up (*He moves to the door, sighs*) Sometimes I wonder if this industry is worth the sacrifice (*He exits*)

BENSON (*smiles*) What'd you do with him?

LAW Put him in an office across the hall

BENSON (*aghast*) What? Why here?

LAW They won't look for him here

BENSON Why didn't you dump him somewhere else?

LAW And leave him free to roam—and blab? Listen, Benson, B K's called the Chief personally and the whole damn police department is scouring the town for Rodney (*Crosses to liquor cabinet, pours a drink*) And you don't know what I've been up against with Rodney (*He drinks*) In his own peculiar English fashion, he's not entirely nit-witted I had to shove him at the mike, and he's been demanding explanations ever since

BENSON One question What'll we do with him?

LAW (*crossing back to couch, sits*). Frankly, I planned everything but Rodney's disposal I don't know But given a little time we'll work this problem out

BENSON (*really aghast now*) Time?

LAW Rodney's all right He doesn't know it, but I've locked him in

BENSON Listen I've got a wife to support! I've got a job to keep! I haven't got Vermont on my mind! I like writing pictures! I'm no god-damn realist!

LAW (*soothingly*) Easy, there, easy—

BENSON If B K even dreamed we had anything to do with this we'd be blacklisted in the industry

LAW (*rising*) Give me a chance to think, will you? Why the panic? I'll admit I've overlooked a few details

BENSON Get that guy out of the studio Put him on a plane to Mexico Strangle him! I don't care what you do

LAW No—no Murder leads to theft and theft leads to decent Haven't you read De Quincey?

BENSON C F may breeze in here any minute Will you get going?

LAW Very well, my sweet—I go (*He starts for door, remembers that he had a coat, looks around room and finally locates it on couch Gets it and exits Phone rings*)

BENSON (*into phone*) Hello Yes, right here Oh, hello, darling How are you feeling? (*Tenderly*) Of course I recognized your voice Pearl, I'll be home in half an hour . . . Less . . . Well, what are you crying about? . . . But I told you I couldn't take you to the opening Well, if Louise was going why didn't you go with them? They'd be tickled

to have you Listen, darling .
I know I know Yes, I'm
listening (*LAW re-enters—a
changed LAW He goes right to the
second telephone*)

LAW (*picking up the second telephone*) Give me the front gate!

BENSON (*into phone*) Yes, darling
yes (*Sincerely*) Darling,
please—please don't say that

LAW Smitty, this is Mr Law Any stranger go through the gate in the last ten minutes? No?

BENSON (*sighs*) Yes, darling

LAW Well, listen The fellow that was on the air tonight—Happy's father—yes! He's loose in the studio
Yeah

BENSON (*turns to LAW, still holding the phone*) What?

LAW Grab him and hold him Don't let anyone come near him Report to me personally yeah

BENSON Darling, I'll call you back (*Slams down the phone*)

LAW (*hangs up*) The damn cleaning woman let him out!

BENSON (*apoplectic*) I told you, didn't I? I told you you shouldn't have brought him here! (*susie enters She has been magnificently decked out for the opening, but despite her splendor she seems extremely unhappy*)

SUSIE Oh, Mr Benson . . . I tried to get you at your house but Mrs Benson said you were here I tried to get you, too, Mr Law, at the hotel.

LAW. Now, now, Susie—I know—I know

SUSIE Oh, I should never have gone to that opening I didn't want to go When I was dressing I put my slip on the wrong side I knew something terrible was going to happen And then in the nursery when I went to say good night to Happy, he wouldn't eat his formula And he wouldn't say good night to me He was so cross I told Larry I didn't want to leave Happy—but he insisted—and then the way Larry ran out on me—

LAW (*consolingly*) Now, now—

SUSIE Why should he do that? Oh, I was so ashamed I didn't even see the picture And then when I got home—I knew I shouldn't have gone—I should never have left Happy When I went to the hospital

LAW Hospital?

BENSON Hospital?

SUSIE They won't let me in not for two weeks

BENSON (*crosses to SUSIE*) Happy's in the hospital?

SUSIE (*puzzled*) Happy's got the measles

LAW What?

SUSIE And they won't let me come near him

BENSON Measles!

LAW He certainly picked the right time for it!

SUSIE That's why he wouldn't eat his formula

C F's VOICE (*offstage, grimly*) Well, we'll see— (*As he opens the door*) I brought you some visitors, boys. Come in (*RODNEY enters with STUDIO OFFICER To RODNEY*) Are these the men?

RODNEY They most certainly are

SUSIE (*crosses to RODNEY*) You know you're not Happy's father

RODNEY Of course not, but—

SUSIE You couldn't be!

RODNEY Of course not! My dear, I'm very sorry Look here, we always seem to meet under extraordinary circumstances I never dreamt

I'd no idea It was all so spectacular And to do this to you— You were so kind to me They said it was a trailer I didn't realize until I was in the midst of it And then I found myself in a car with him (*Indicates LAW*) I asked him to bring me to you at once Instead, he locked me in a dusty office

C F So you boys put him up to it!

LAW Before you say anything you'll be sorry for, C F (*Turns to OFFICER*) Smitty, who called you to night to tell you this unfortunate young man was loose in the studio?

OFFICER You did, Mr Law

LAW (*grandly*) That's all

BENSON Take him away

LAW It's an obvious psychiatric case, C F

BENSON (to C F) I wouldn't be surprised if he's the boy that's been springing out of bushes

LAW Certainly Look at the way he kissed Susie!

RODNEY (*appalled*) But you coached me for hours Both of you Wait—here are my lines (*He fumbles in his pocket*) I know I have them—unless I've lost them

LAW So you're an author, too! And I thought it was extemporaneous

RODNEY Here—here they are! My dear, will you please read these lines? (*He hands the paper to SUSIE*) They're the very words I spoke over the radio

SUSIE (*reads and backs away from RODNEY*) You never said *these* lines You *must* be a crank Maybe you do spring out of bushes

RODNEY (*stares*) Oh, I beg your pardon My lines are on the other side

LAW (*grabs for paper*) I'll take that! Susie—

C F (*taking paper out of SUSIE's hand, brushes LAW aside*) Just a minute (*Reads*) "She's a high-handed rich bitch"—Tiger Tamer! —There it is in the corner Tiger Tamer by J Carlyle Benson and Robert Law!

LAW (*hurt to the quick*) It's a forgery Benson, we've been framed!

C F (*grimly*) This is the last prank you'll ever play (*Clicks the dictograph.*)

MISS CREWS (*enters*) The new trumpets are here (*For once, C F is not interested The trumpets blare out*)

C F (*into dictograph*) B K? I just found out—Benson and Law put that young man on the radio

B K'S VOICE Are you sure of that?

C F I have the proof The young man is in my office

B K'S VOICE All right, fire them I don't want them on this lot If they think they can get away with that—

C F Fire them? Of course I'll fire them
(LARRY'S voice is heard as he enters)

LARRY Don't tell me nothing—let go of me (DOCTOR and ROSETTI enter, following LARRY and struggling with him)

C F Quiet there—

LARRY Let go of me!

C F Larry, I have neither the time nor the patience to pander to actors!

LARRY (*bellowing with the hurt roar of a wounded bull*) No? Babies, huh (*Turns on SUSIE*) You—you—

SUSIE (*frightened, runs to BENSON*) What do you want?

LARRY What do I want? That god-damn baby of yours has given me the measles!

ACT THREE

A hospital corridor Several weeks later Facing us are several doors, punctuated by the little white cards identifying the patients within

As the curtain rises, a white-clad NURSE is walking down the corridor bearing a covered tray Before she disappears, BENSON enters He knocks on the door of the room where HAPPY is ensconced SUSIE opens the door

SUSIE Oh, hello, Mr Benson I'd ask you to come in but Happy's still sleeping The doctor says he can be discharged tomorrow or the day after, he's getting along so fine Where's Mr Law?

BENSON I don't know We haven't been patronizing the same barrooms

SUSIE You look as if you didn't get much sleep

BENSON (*slumping into a wheel chair*) I didn't

SUSIE (*pityingly*) Why don't you go home?

BENSON Home?

SUSIE Is there anything wrong?

BENSON Not a thing! Everything's fine

SUSIE How's Mrs Benson?

BENSON She's fine

SUSIE That's good I called your house to thank her for the radio for Happy but they said you moved

BENSON We *were* moved

SUSIE You mean you were thrown out?

BENSON If you want to be technical about it, yes

SUSIE Oh, I'm sorry

BENSON (*broodingly*) What hurts is Aggrafino Jesus

SUSIE Who?

BENSON My favorite Filipino butler He slapped a lien on my brand-new Packard

SUSIE Oh!

BENSON That's what the missionaries taught *him*!

SUSIE You boys shouldn't have played that joke on me You only hurt yourselves Please don't drink any more, Mr Benson

BENSON So it's come to that! You're going to reform me

SUSIE Well, I feel just like a sister to you boys That's why I couldn't stay mad at you Please, Mr Benson, if you need money—I can give you some I mean—when the studio sends

Happy's checks They haven't sent them yet

BENSON (*looking up*) They haven't? How many do they owe you?

SUSIE Two I called Mr Frnday but he wouldn't talk to me Do you think they're docking Happy?

BENSON They can't do that Measles are an act of God
(NURSE *enters with a box of flowers*)

NURSE Some flowers for you, Mrs Seabrook

SUSIE (*extending her hand for it*) Oh, thank you

NURSE And he'd like to know if he can come up to see you He's downstairs

SUSIE (*embarrassed*) Oh

BENSON Who's downstairs? Who's sending you flowers?

SUSIE (*reluctantly*) It's Mr Bevan You know—

BENSON You haven't been seeing our Nemesis?

SUSIE Oh, no But he's been writing me every day and sending me flowers I didn't tell you I didn't want to get you excited

BENSON (*to NURSE, sweetly*) Tell him to come up, Nurse And stand by

SUSIE (*quickly*) Oh, no, Nurse He's not to come up I don't want to see him Ever And give him back his flowers (*She hands box back to NURSE*)

NURSE (*taking it*) Very well (*She exits*)

BENSON Why deprive me of the pleasure of kicking an actor?

SUSIE It wasn't his fault After all, you put him up to it

BENSON (*outraged*) Are you defending him?

SUSIE Oh, no, I'm just as disappointed in him as you are But I'm trying to be fair (*She pauses*) He writes very nice letters (*A far-away look comes into her eyes*)

BENSON (*suspiciously*) What kind of letters do you write him?

SUSIE (*hastily*) Oh, I don't write any letters

BENSON Good!

SUSIE I'm afraid of my spelling (*LAW enters There's an air of on-my-way about him*)

LAW Hello, Susie And good-bye, Susie

SUSIE Hello, Mr Law Are you going away?

LAW I am

SUSIE Where?

LAW Where I belong Vermont Where you can touch life and feel life, and write it! (*Glares at BENSON*)

BENSON When does the great exodus begin?

LAW In exactly thirty-five minutes I'm flying back to my native hills,

like a homing pigeon No stopping
in New York for me! I've chartered
a plane—right to Vermont

BENSON Chartered a plane! Where'd
you get the money?

LAW (*grudgingly*) Well, there are
twelve Rotarians coming along

BENSON You'll be back in a week

SUSIE (*eagerly*) Will you, Mr Law?

LAW (*scornfully*) Back to what? Sun-
shine and psyllium seed? Listen, I've
got me a little shack overlooking the
valley I'm going to cook my own
food, chop my own wood, and
write—

BENSON (*sardonically*) At twenty
below?

LAW (*rapturously*) Snow! God,
how I love snow! (*He raises his eyes
to Heaven*)

And since to look at things in
bloom
Fifty springs are little room,
About the woodlands I will go
To see the cherry—hung with
snow!

SUSIE That's poetry

LAW A E Housman! *Shropshire
Lad* (*He pats the book in his
pocket*)

BENSON There's plenty of snow in
Arrowhead

LAW Yeah, they deliver it in trucks
And even when it's real you think it's
cornflakes

SUSIE You won't drink too much in
Vermont, will you, Mr Law?

LAW Only the heady wine air that
has no dregs!

SUSIE Because you're crazy enough
without drinking

LAW (*defensively*) I drank for
escape escape from myself
but now I'm free! I've found peace!

SUSIE You'll say good-bye to Happy
before you go? I want him to re-
member you

LAW Right now!

SUSIE Wait! I'll see if he's awake
(*She enters HAPPY'S room*)

BENSON Will you send me a copy
of the book—autographed?

LAW You get copy number one—
first edition

BENSON What's the book about?

LAW I'm going to bare my soul
I'm going to write life in the raw
I've got the opening all planned—
two rats in a sewer!

BENSON Sounds delightful

LAW (*scornfully*) You wouldn't ap-
preciate real writing You've been
poisoned On second thought, I won't
send you a book

BENSON Tell me more about the rats
What's your story?

LAW (*slightly patronizing*) This
isn't a picture that you paste together,
Mr Benson I'm going to write Life
Life isn't a story it's a discordant
overture to death!

BENSON Well, if you want people to read it, the boy had better meet the girl

LAW There is no girl There is no boy These are people—real, live people—listen! I'm not even going to use a typewriter! I'm going to weigh every word—with a pencil!

BENSON Well, maybe you're on the right track You've got something to say—and the talent to say it with

LAW It's finally penetrated!

BENSON You're probably doing the right thing

LAW The only thing It's different with you—you've got a wife

BENSON I had

LAW Huh?

BENSON Oh—uh—Pearl left last night

LAW No! I'm sorry

BENSON (*shrugs*) You can't blame her She wasn't wild about marrying me in the first place I coaxed her into it I painted some pretty pictures for her It just didn't pan out

LAW You still want her?

BENSON (*almost to himself*) I guess I do

LAW Personally, I'd say the hell with her

BENSON (*smiles bitterly*) The trouble is I don't mean it when I say it (*ROSETTI enters*)

ROSETTI Hello, boys

LAW (*cheerily*) Hello, louse Get Benson a job, will you? He wants to stay in this God-forsaken hole

ROSETTI Listen! I'm not handling second-hand writers Chicken feed! Right now I'm immersed in a three million dollar deal

LAW (*interested*) Yeah?

ROSETTI Yeah With Gaumont British, and I'm underestimating when I say three million because B K's turned down three million Why should I bother with writers on the blacklist? So don't go calling me a louse! (*SUSIE enters*)

SUSIE (*gaily*) Happy has his eyes open You want to come in now, Mr Law?

LAW Coming, Susie (*He follows SUSIE into HAPPY'S room*)

BENSON Rosetti— (*Going to him, whispering*) Law wants to leave He's flying in half an hour Can you call up the studios? Can you get us a one-picture contract? We'll make you our agent for life *He's leaving!*

ROSETTI Sure, he's leaving Nobody wants him

BENSON How do you know? You haven't tried

ROSETTI I've tried I don't let my personal feelings interfere with commissions

BENSON Listen, I've been a scene painter, prop boy, camera man, director, producer I even sold film in Austraha They can't throw me out of this business!

ROSETTI (*crosses to a door and throws it back*) They won't touch you with a ten-foot pole You, Law, or Happy

BENSON Or Happy?

ROSETTI I gave B K a swell angle Listen in on KNX this afternoon

BENSON Huh?

ROSETTI The world is full of babies You can get them two for a nickel (*He opens inner door and meets LARRY coming out*) Hello, Larry I was just coming in to see you (*NURSE pushes LARRY in wheel chair into corridor*)

LAW'S VOICE Good-bye, Happy (*He enters with SUSIE*) Good-bye, Susie

SUSIE Good-bye, Mr Law

LAW Hello, Larry How's every little spot?

LARRY What's the idea?

LAW What idea?

LARRY What's the idea of sending me a box of dead spiders?

LAW Didn't you like the box?

LARRY You wait until I'm through convalescing!

NURSE Now, don't excite yourself You heard what the doctor said You're going for your sun bath now (*She wheels him out*)

ROSETTI I'll go along with you, Larry I've got some great news for you B K's lending you out to Mascot! (*He exits*)

LARRY (*as he goes out*). What?

LAW Well, Susie, take good care of Happy

SUSIE Oh, I will

LAW Continue your education

SUSIE I'm doing that

LAW (*quickly*) What's the capital of Nebraska?

SUSIE Lincoln

LAW Who hit Sir Isaac Newton on the bean with an apple?

SUSIE The law of gravity

LAW Who said, "Don't give up the ship?"

SUSIE Captain James Lawrence in the battle of Lake Erie, 1813

LAW Don't give up the ship, Susie I'll write you (*He kisses her on the forehead*)

SUSIE Good-bye, Mr Law I've got to go back to Happy (*Her voice breaks*) I feel awful funny—your going away (*Exits*)

BENSON (*finally*) Well, you bastard—get out of here

LAW I'm going, stinker (*Crosses to BENSON They look at each other A pause Then LAW extends hand They shake LAW moves to go*)

BENSON (*without turning*) Say—(*LAW stops*) I don't suppose you'll be interested—Rosetti finally admitted Paramount wants us Two thousand bucks a week to save Diet-

nch We can close the deal in three or four days

LAW (*turns slowly*) My plane leaves in twenty-five minutes And you're a bar!

BENSON I'm not trying to hold you back But I figured this time you might save your money and—

LAW I can live on twelve dollars a week in Vermont—in luxury!

BENSON It would kind of help me out— If I could lay my hands on some ready dough Pearl might listen to reason.

LAW (*casually*) Well, we loaned out a lot of money in our time Collect it And send me my share

BENSON I thought of that The trouble is I don't remember just who it was—and how much The only one I remember is Jascha Simkovitch

LAW Who?

BENSON Jascha Simkovitch The fellow that came over with Eisenstein Don't you remember? You made a wonderful crack about him He said "There's a pnce on my head in Russia" And you said, "Yeah—two roubles" (*Laughs He is flattering LAW smoothly*)

LAW (*laughs with him*) Sure, I remember him Why, we gave that bed-bug three thousand bucks! Get hold of him and collect it

BENSON He's in Paris What's-his-name came over and said Jascha was living at the Rutz bar.

LAW Then you can't collect it. Well, I'm off (*He moves to exit once more*)

BENSON (*as if struck with sudden thought*) Wait a minute! I've got a great gag for you! Let's call Jascha up in Paris—on Larry's phone! (*Chuckles, throws arms around LAW Both laugh*) Can you imagine Larry's face when he gets the bill? A fare—well nbl

LAW (*hesitates*) Have I got time?

BENSON (*reassuringly, looks at his watch*) You've got plenty of time

LAW I'll work fast Stand guard, Benson (*He enters LARRY's room BENSON follows and partly closes door*)

LAW'S VOICE I'm talking for Mr Toms I want to put a call through to Paris, France I want Jascha Simkovitch Hotel Rutz, Paris

Listen, don't worry about the charges That's right—Jascha, as in Heifetz S-i-m-k-o-v-i-t-c-h (*BENSON closes door on LAW NURSE enters with registered letter, knocks on SUSIE's door BENSON looks at his watch SUSIE appears*)

NURSE Registered letter for you, Mrs Seabrook

SUSIE For me?

NURSE You'll have to sign for it. There's a return receipt on it (*SUSIE signs*)

SUSIE Now what do I do?

NURSE Now you give me the receipt back and I'll give it to the postman. He's waiting for it Here's your let-

ter (*NURSE exits SUSIE opens letter*)

SUSIE (*cheerily*) Why—it's from Mr Friday (*LAW emerges, as she opens the letter*)

LAW The service had better be good or there'll be no farewell rib I haven't got much time

SUSIE Oh, didn't you go yet, Mr Law?

LAW I'm on my way!

SUSIE (*reading letter*) What does Mr Friday mean when he says they're taking advantage of Clause 5A?

LAW What? Let me see that (*He reads the letter BENSON looks over his shoulder*) Well, this is the god-damnedest

SUSIE You mustn't swear so much I don't mind—I'm used to it—but Happy might hear you What does it mean?

LAW (*reading*) Clause 5A—when an artist through illness—for a period of more than fourteen days—

BENSON They're just using that for an excuse It's the paternity issue!

SUSIE What paternity issue?

BENSON They're crazy! That kid's going to be as good as he ever was—better

SUSIE What does it mean?

LAW It means, Susie—Happy is out

SUSIE Out?

BENSON Yeah Finished—done At the age of eight months— In his prime!

SUSIE Out of pictures?

BENSON (*turning on LAW*) And there's the man who did it It was your brilliant idea!

SUSIE (*such a nice girl!*) Oh, no After all, it was just like a dream I had to wake up some time

LAW (*as phone rings*) I guess that's Paris

SUSIE What's Paris? (*Phone still rings*)

BENSON Go ahead and have your farewell rib, and get out, author! (*Phone still rings LAW enters room*)

SUSIE What's Paris?

BENSON (*going to door of LARRY'S room*) A city in France

LAW (*in room*) Hello—right here — Yes—yes—I'm ready Hello! Hello —Jascha? Jascha Simkovitch? This is Bobby Law Is it raining in Paris? well, it's not raining here!

BENSON Wonderful age we're living in!

LAW (*in room*) Listen, Jascha, are you sober? How come? Oh, you just got there! You're going to London? Today? Hold the wire (*LAW enters*) I've got an idea! Let's buy the studio!

BENSON What?

LAW You heard Rosetti Gaumont British is offering three million Let's

get Jascha to send a cable—sign it Gaumont British—offering four!

BENSON Why be petty? Offer five!

LAW (*judicially*) Right! (*Exits into room*)

SUSIE You boys are very peculiar

LAW (*in room*) Jascha—got a pencil and paper? Fine Listen, Jascha, we want you to send a cable from London as follows Quote

(LARRY *enters in his wheel chair*

BENSON *closes the door hurriedly*)

LARRY Hey, that's my room!

BENSON (*firmly shutting the door*) A private conversation should be private

LARRY What's the idea of using my phone?

BENSON Do you object?

LARRY Certainly I object I ain't gonna pay for your calls

BENSON All right, if that's the way you feel about it—here's your nickell!

BLACKOUT AND CURTAIN

SCENE II

In Your Own Home That is, if you have one, and if you listen to the radio

RADIO ANNOUNCER Ladies and Gentlemen, this is Station KNX—the Voice of Hollywood At this time we take great pleasure in announcing the winner of the Royal Studios' Baby Star Contest to find the successor to Happy, who retired from the screen after his illness Ladies and Gentlemen, the lucky baby is Baby Sylvester Burnett, infant son of Mr and Mrs

Oliver Burnett of Glendale, California Congratulations, Mr and Mrs Burnett Contracts for your baby are waiting in Mr C Elliot Friday's office at the Royal Studios Incidentally, Mr Friday asks that you bring your baby's birth certificate and your marriage license This is KNX, the Voice of Hollywood (*Chimes are heard*)

SCENE III

MR FRIDAY'S office, the following day MR FRIDAY is sitting at his desk, dictating to MISS CREWS

C F My dear Mr Pirandello On second thought, you'd better make that Signor Pirandello I

am writing to ascertain if possibly you have something in your trunk—every author has—which would be

suitable as a vehicle for our new baby star, Baby Sylvester Burnett. It can be either a short story or sketch or a few lines which you can jot down at your leisure and which we can whip up into suitable material. I am writing of my own volition as both Mrs. Friday and I are great admirers of you. Very truly yours

Now take a letter to Stark Young (*Dictograph buzzes*) Yes?

B K's VOICE Listen, Friday—

C F What, B K?

B K's VOICE Come right up here. I want to see you. We've got a new cable from Gaumont British.

C F Gaumont British? Yes, sir, I'll be right up. (*He rises*) Miss Crews, have you the contracts for the Burnett baby?

MISS CREWS Right on your desk, Mr. Friday. And the parents are in the commissary.

C F Good. I've got to go up and see B K. (*Exits*)

GREEN (*who enters almost simultaneously, followed by SLADE*) Where is he? Where's C F?

MISS CREWS You can't shoot him today.

GREEN It's a wonder we don't. We're walking up and down in front of the projection room developing an idea when we hear a number—our number—We go in, and it's in *Young England*! Our song! They don't even tell us about it—they murdered it! They run dialogue over it. You got to spot a song—we ask for Guy Lombardo and they give us a six-piece symphony orchestra!

MISS CREWS If you buy me a handkerchief I promise to cry. Lace, if you don't mind.

GREEN Lissen—play her the number the way it should be.

MISS CREWS Must you?

SLADE Oh, what's the use?

GREEN Give her the chorus.

SLADE I'm losing my pep.

GREEN You might as well hear it. Nobody else will. (*SLADE plays*) Will you listen to that? Ain't it a shame?

You promised love undying,
And begged me to believe,
Then you left, and left me cry-
ing
With pain in my heart, and
my heart on my sleeve.

I really shouldn't blame you
Because you chose to leave,
But one thing forever will
shame you—
It's the pain in my heart, and
my heart on my sleeve.

(C F has entered)

C F Miss Crews!

MISS CREWS Yes, Mr. Friday?

C F Miss Crews, get hold of Benson and Law right away!

MISS CREWS Who?

C F Have Benson and Law come here—immediately.

MISS CREWS Yes, Mr. Friday.

GREEN (*as SLADE pounds away*)
That's the chorus! That's the chorus
that you murdered!

C F Wait a minute, Miss Crews!
Get me the hospital I want to talk
to Happy's mother

MISS CREWS Yes, Mr Friday (*She
exits*)

C F Miss Crews! Call my florist and
tell him to send Happy a bouquet of
roses And some orchids for his
mother, right away (*He turns to
GREEN*) Will you stop that noise!
(*He picks up telephone*)

GREEN Noise? The song that you
murdered? We just wanna see if you
got a conscience

C F (*into phone*) Miss Crews, call
up Magnin's and tell them to send a
radio to the hospital for Happy One
of those slick, modernistic sets in
white And don't forget to have my
card put in with the flowers Did you
get Benson and Law? Well, did
you get Happy's mother? Well,
get them! (*Hangs up*)

GREEN Is that a song that you run
dialogue over, C F?

C F What are you babbling about,
Green? I haven't used any of your
songs in *Young England*!

GREEN (*outraged*) How about *West-
minster Abbey in the Moonlight*?
They wasn't our lyrics, but it was
our tune!

C F I used an old Jerome Kern num-
ber we've had for years, out of the
library

GREEN (*crestfallen*) You did? (*To
SLADE*) I thought you said it came to
you in the middle of the night
Where? In the library?

C F Will you get out of my office?

GREEN (*with sudden enthusiasm*)
We got a new number you'll be crazy
about

C F I've got too much on my mind
to listen to your tinny effusions I
told the studio to hire Richard Strauss
and no one else One great composer
is worth twenty of your ilk!
(*ROSETTI enters with LARRY*)

LARRY Looka here, C F, I just got
out of a sick bed to see you

C F What do you want Larry?
(*SLADE plays on*) What do you want?
I'm very busy (*Turns to GREEN*)
Will you please go? I will not listen!

GREEN (*as the worm turns*)
O K, music lover! (*GREEN and
SLADE exit*)

LARRY I shouldn't be here I should
be on my ranch convalescing I'm
weak

C F Come to the point, Larry Come
to the point

LARRY (*butterfly*) What's the idea of
lending me out to Mascot? I'm a star!
I ain't goin' to degrade myself by
playing in no undignified thirty-thou-
sand-dollar feature

C F Larry, face the facts—you're
through

LARRY That's a nice thing to tell a
sick man

ROSETTI Now, Larry, I told you.
Your attitude is all wrong

LARRY Never mind about my attitude

C F (at the phone) Miss Crews, have you got Benson and Law? Who's gone to Vermont? What about Susie? What? They left the hospital? (He hangs up)

ROSETTI (eagerly) What's up, C F?

C F (finally) This is confidential, Rosetti (Lowers his voice) Gaumont British wants to buy the company intact

LARRY Gaumont British?

C F They want all our stars, including Happy Naturally they want him He's the sensation of London

ROSETTI But B K turned down three million I've been handling that deal myself

C F They've raised it They've just cabled an offer of five million

ROSETTI They did? Say, that's marvellous I'm in on that!

LARRY Well, you better get me back from Mascot quick Gaumont British wants me Why, they made me an offer a year ago, only I was tied up

C F They made no mention of you

LARRY What?

C F Rosetti, we've got to sign Happy immediately Get hold of Susie and let's close

ROSETTI You can sign the three of 'em for a hundred a week They're broke And they're low I'm going right after it (He starts for door)

LARRY Come back here You're supposed to be my agent! What are you going to do about me?

ROSETTI You're all right where you are—with Mascot I'll call you later
C F (Exits)

LARRY (to C F) My agent! I been dis trustin' that guy for years (Exits)

C F (Who can balance a budget, picks up phone) Miss Crews, you didn't send those flowers off, did you? What? But they've left the hospital What about the radio?

Well, call them up right away and cancel it Who? She's here? Send her right in! (He crosses to greet SUSIE He is now cordial, hearty, a thing of beauty and a joy forever) Well, Susie, I'm delighted to see you You're looking well I must say we've missed you I hear the boys are in Vermont

SUSIE (stands in door) Mr Law was going but he missed the plane

C F (taken aback) Well, where are they?

SUSIE They're in B K's office, getting the contracts

C F Without consulting me?

SUSIE They said they don't trust you, Mr Friday

C F Gad! After all I've done for them!

SUSIE (*seating herself on the couch*)
Do you mind if I sit here and do my homework? I'm way behind and I don't want to be left back I'm supposed to wait here until they get B K's signature, and then I'm going to sign

C F I'm going right up to see B K
(*MISS CREWS enters*)

MISS CREWS Mr and Mrs Burnett have had their coffee and now they want their contracts

C F What contracts?

MISS CREWS The parents of the o her infant

C F What other infant? What other infant is there except Happy?

MISS CREWS But what'll I do with them?

C F Send them away (*Now he sees RODNEY looking in through door*)

RODNEY (*has a large box of flowers*)
What do you want?

RODNEY Here's the check for the milk—and other odd items

C F Check

RODNEY I think you'll find it correct I verified it at the commissary And of course I included a service charge—and interest at six per cent The total is two dollars and eighty-four cents Thank you (*Dictograph buzzes*)

C F (*into dictograph*) Hello—

B K's VOICE Listen, Friday, you might as well be here I'm settling

the Happy contract with Benson and Law

C F Yes, B K I'm coming right up (*Phone rings, into phone*) What?

I never asked for trumpets in the first place I don't want any trumpets I want a period of utter silence See that I get it (*Hangs up To RODNEY*) You get out!

RODNEY (*firmly*) I've something to say to Mrs Seabrook (*SUSIE turns away Softly*) I brought you some flowers

C F Give her her flowers, and get out And don't let me find you here when I come back Miss Crews, I'll be up in B K's office (*He exits*)

RODNEY I know you don't want to see me (*Extends flowers*) Won't you take them? (*MISS CREWS exits*) I wrote, you know I explained everything

SUSIE (*still not facing him*) Happy's not allowed to have flowers

RODNEY Oh, but they're for Happy's mother—from Happy's father

SUSIE (*turning, aghast*) Are you joking about what you did?

RODNEY I'm not joking Lord, no I mean it Look here—will you marry me? (*SUSIE stares at him*) I've thought it all out I owe it to you Shall we consider it settled?

SUSIE Did Mr Law and Mr Benson put you up to this, too?

RODNEY Good Lord, no I haven't seen them and, what's more, I don't intend to

SUSIE Then why do you want to marry me?

RODNEY I owe it to you

SUSIE (*angrily*) That's no reason

RODNEY My visa's expired—I've two days' grace I must get a train this afternoon Are you coming with me?

SUSIE I don't think you'd make a very sensible father for Happy I don't think so at all

RODNEY I'm not at all sensible I'm frightfully stupid—impulsive—emotional—but I'm not really at my best these days Most people aren't when they're infatuated

SUSIE You couldn't be infatuated with me!

RODNEY But I am Look here, it's no good debating My mind's made up I don't frequently make it up, but when I do, I stick to the end

SUSIE But you don't know about my past

RODNEY I've been through all that, in my mind It doesn't matter

SUSIE But it does I'm ashamed to tell you

RODNEY Please don't, then

SUSIE Happy's father was a bigamist

RODNEY Eh?

SUSIE He married twice

RODNEY Is that it?

SUSIE What did you think?

RODNEY It doesn't really matter

SUSIE I didn't know he was married before

RODNEY But, good Lord, nobody can blame you

SUSIE His wife did

RODNEY Naturally.

SUSIE How was I to know? And it wasn't his fault, either He got a Mexican divorce and he didn't know it wasn't good

RODNEY Oh!

SUSIE (*drawing herself up à la Fairfax*) So I said to him, "Your duty is to your first wife" And I ran away I didn't know I was going to have Happy, then

RODNEY Have you—heard from him?

SUSIE Oh, no Of course, he should have told me in the first place But he was infatuated, too, and I didn't know any better

RODNEY Well, have you divorced him?

SUSIE No

RODNEY You'll have to clear that matter up, I think—immediately

SUSIE I can't clear it up He's dead.

RODNEY Oh!

SUSIE She shot him

RODNEY His wife?

SUSIE Yes

RODNEY Good Lord!

SUSIE I hear from her sometimes
She's awfully sorry

RODNEY (*brightly*) Well then,
you're free to marry, aren't you?

SUSIE Oh, I'm free, but the point is
—do I want to? After all, I don't
know you very well, and every time
we meet something terrible happens
I didn't know Jack very well, either,
and look what happened to him I've
got to be careful

RODNEY But I'm not a bigamist

SUSIE Maybe not You may be some-
thing else

RODNEY But the British Consul'll
vouch for me He knows my family
I haven't had much of a life, but it's
an open book

SUSIE Oh, I believe you But I can't
listen to my heart I've got to listen to
my head

RODNEY Of course, I haven't much
to offer you I've just come into a lit-
tle money, and on my thirtieth birth-
day I come into a great deal more We
can have a flat in London and one
of my aunts is going to leave me a
place in the country

SUSIE That's in Europe, isn't it?

RODNEY Yes, of course

SUSIE Oh, I couldn't go to Europe

RODNEY But why not?

SUSIE The boys want to put Happy
back in pictures

RODNEY I wouldn't hear of it That's
no life for a baby Thoroughly ab-
normal And, furthermore, I don't
like the California climate Now in
England we have the four seasons

SUSIE You have?

RODNEY (*ardently*) Summer, win-
ter, spring and fall

SUSIE (*finally*) I want to ask you
something

RODNEY Certainly

SUSIE When I come into a room—
does something happen to you?

RODNEY Eh? Of course—very much
so

SUSIE (*rises and turns away*) Well,
I'll think it over

RODNEY (*rises and takes SUSIE'S
arm*) Look here, I couldn't possibly
take no for an answer

SUSIE Of course, when you come
into a room, something happens to
me, too

RODNEY Does it really? (*SUSIE nods.
He takes her in his arms They kiss
Door opens and LAW enters with
BENSON*)

LAW Susie, did my eyes deceive me?
Were you kissing an actor?

BENSON What's that?

LAW (*to BENSON*) An English
actor!

BENSON What? Didn't I tell you—?

SUSIE Boys, I've been thinking it
over—

BENSON (*wearily drops down to piano, LAW down to end of couch*)
With what?

SUSIE I'm going to marry Rodney and I'm going to Europe They've got the four seasons over there, and Happy'll be normal

RODNEY Well put, my dear
(C F *enters*)

SUSIE So I don't think I'd better sign the contract

RODNEY. Most certainly not!

C F You're not going to sign Happy?

LAW Susie, I've just given up Vermont for a whole year—for you A whole year out of my life—because B K begged me to stay and handle Happy I've sacrificed a great book—for what? A paltry fifteen hundred dollars a week? I didn't want it!

C F If she doesn't sign, we'll break that contract with you, Law

LAW Try and do it

SUSIE I'm going to Europe with Rodney

LAW Do you want to tell Happy he's out of pictures? Do you want to break his little heart?

SUSIE He'll understand

BENSON (*suddenly*) Do you know who Rodney is? English Jack! Confidence man

LAW (*quickly*) Yes! Ship's gambler, petty racketeer and heartbreaker
(RODNEY *tries to speak*)

BENSON Served two terms for bigamy!

SUSIE Bigamy?

RODNEY But that's absurd.

BENSON (*bitterly*) I've seen hundreds of your kind in Limehouse

C F So have I!

BENSON (*quietly*) Listen, C F., stay off our side!

RODNEY (*to SUSIE*) You don't believe this, of course They can't possibly believe it themselves

LAW Brazening it out, eh? As sure as God made little green apples—and He did—you're not coming near Susie We'll have you in the can and out of the country by morning

BENSON. No sooner said— (*Into phone*) Get me the Department of Justice

SUSIE (*to RODNEY*) You see? Something terrible always happens when you come

LAW (*to SUSIE*) And you—sign that contract immediately

RODNEY She'll do nothing of the sort You're not to intimidate her Do you hear?
(*Door opens and LARRY enters, accompanied by middle-aged English gentleman*)

LARRY Come on in here, Major

C.F. What do you want, Larry? I'm busy

BENSON (*into telephone*) Department of Justice? I want two of your best operatives to come down to the Royal Studios immediately Report to Mr Friday's office.

SUSIE Oh, but you can't do that—

LARRY (*angrily*) Just a minute Major Thompson is the representative here of Gaumont British

C F Oh! I'm sorry We've been rather upset How do you do, Major? I'm Mr Friday

MAJOR How do you do, sir? I won't be a moment Mr Toms suggested I come down here He told me you'd received a cable from my home office

C F Yes—yes—

MAJOR He was rather upset because his name wasn't mentioned

C F Yes, yes—

MAJOR I called my home office, and they assure me they never sent such a cable

C F What?

LARRY That's what! It was a phony!

RODNEY (*who has been trying to attract attention for some time*) Major!

MAJOR Well! Aren't you— Why, how do you do? I thought I recognized you Met up with your brother By the way, I saw him a few weeks ago just before I sailed Particularly asked me to look you up

RODNEY Is my name English Jack? Am I a ship's gambler? Have I served sentences for bigamy?

MAJOR Good Gad, no!

RODNEY Will you vouch for me?

MAJOR (*a bore of bores*) Vouch for Puffy Bevan? Delighted! His brother—splendid chap— I met him first in India—he's a captain in the Coldstream Guards His father is Lord Severingham His sister is Lady Beasley—lectures, I believe Now, let me see—

LAW (*interrupting*) Did you say— Lord Severingham?

MAJOR Yes

BENSON I beg your pardon, sir—his father? (*He indicates RODNEY*)

MAJOR Yes
(BENSON *shakes his head in wonder*)

SUSIE Is your father a lord?

RODNEY It doesn't matter, does it?

SUSIE If you don't care, I don't care

MAJOR If I can be of any further service—

RODNEY No I think we'll sail along beautifully now Thanks

MAJOR Good afternoon (*Shakes hands with RODNEY*)

C F Who sent that cable? That's all I want to know! Who sent that cable! (*MAJOR and LARRY exit*) Who perpetrated this hoax? Who's responsible for this outrage? By Gad, I'll find out! (*Exits*)

RODNEY (*turns to SUSIE*) Shall we go?

SUSIE Good-bye, boys Take care of yourselves

LAW (*bows, bitterly*) Thank you, milady

SUSIE Don't drink too much

LAW Thank you, milady

SUSIE You were awful good to me Yes, they were, Rodney They were awful good to me sometimes

RODNEY In that case, I don't mind shaking hands with you (*Starts toward LAW*)

LAW (*quickly*) Don't shake hands (ust go Dissolve—slow fade-out)

BENSON (*pantomiming*) Shimmer away!

RODNEY Eh? (*Shrugs*) Well—come, Susie

SUSIE (*waving a delicate little hand*) Good-bye, boys (*Pause They exit in silence*)

LAW (*tense*) I wonder what C F's up to?

BENSON (*struck all of a heap*) The hell with that Look at it—it checks! Cinderella—Prince Charming—Boy meets girl! Boy loses girl! Boy gets girl! Where's your damned realism now?

(C F enters He looks grimly at the boys)

C F (*finally*) Well—it's a good thing you boys are not mixed up in this! (*He goes to desk*)

BENSON (*slowly*) What?

LAW (*slowly*) What happened, C F?

C F I don't understand it at all The cable was sent from London all right But B K should have known it was a fake It was sent collect (*He picks up phone*)

LAW Jascha always sends collect

C F Huh? (*Into phone*) Miss Crews, get hold of the Burnett baby immediately Who? the what is here? (*Puzzled The answer comes in the clarion call of the trumpets, blaring their gay, lilting notes through the windows Ta-ra-ta-ta-ta-ta-tata-tata-tata! So much pleasanter than a factory whistle, don't you think?*)

CURTAIN

The Women

BY CLARE BOOTHE

TO BUFF COBB

WITH LOVE

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The Women was first produced at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre, New York City, by Max Gordon, on December 26, 1936, and closed on July 9, 1938
 Following is the original cast

| | |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| JANE | Anne Teeman |
| SYLVIA (Mrs Howard Fowler) | Ilka Chase |
| NANCY BLAKE | Jane Seymour |
| PEGGY (Mis John Day) | Adrienne Marden |
| EDITH (Mis Phelps Potter) | Phyllis Povah |
| MARY (Mrs Stephen Haines) | Margalo Gillmore |
| MRS WAGSTAFF | Ethel Jackson |
| OLGA | Ruth Hammond |
| FIRST HAIRDRESSER | Mary Stuart |
| SECOND HAIRDRESSER | Jane Moore |
| PEDICURIST | Ann Watson |
| EUPHIE | Eloise Bennett |
| MISS FORDYCE | Eileen Burns |
| LITTLE MARY | Charita Bauer |
| MRS MOREHEAD | Jessie Busley |
| FIRST SALESWOMAN | Doris Day |
| SECOND SALESWOMAN | Jean Rodney |
| HEAD SALESWOMAN | Lucille Fenton |
| FIRST MODEL | Beryl Wallace |
| THIRD SALESWOMAN | Martina Thomas |
| CRYSTAL ALLEN | Betty Lawford |
| A FITTER | Joy Hathaway |
| SECOND MODEL | Beatrice Cole |
| PRINCESS TAMARA | Arlene Francis |
| EXERCISE INSTRUCTRESS | Anne Hunter |
| MAGGIE | Mary Cecil |
| MISS WATTS | Virghia Chew |
| MISS TRIMMERBACK | Mary Murray |
| A NURSE | Lucille Fenton |
| LUCY | Marjorie Main |
| COUNTESS DE LAGE | Margaret Douglass |
| MIRIAM AARONF | Audrey Christie |

HELENE

Arlene Francis

SADIE

Marjorie Wood

CIGARETTE GIRL

Lillian Norton

Directed by Robert B. Sinclair
Settings designed by Jo Mielziner
Costumes supervised by John Hambleton

SCENES

ACT ONE

SCENE I

Mary Haines' living room A winter afternoon

SCENE II

A hairdresser's An afternoon, a few days later

SCENE III

Mary's boudoir, an hour later

SCENE IV

A fitting room An afternoon, two months later

ACT TWO

SCENE I

An exercise room, two weeks later

SCENE II

Mary's kitchen, midnight, a few days later

SCENE III

Mary's living room, a month later

SCENE IV

A hospital room, a month later

SCENE V

A Reno hotel room, a few weeks later

ACT THREE

SCENE I

Crystal's bathroom, early evening, two years later

SCENE II

Mary's bathroom, eleven-thirty, the same night

SCENE III

The Powder Room at the Casino Roof, near midnight, the same night

THE WOMEN

ACT ONE

SCENE I

MARY HAINES' living room Today, Park Avenue living rooms are decorated with a significant indifference to the fact that ours is still a bisexual society Period peacock alleys, crystal-hung prima-donna roosts, they reflect the good taste of their mistresses in everything but a consideration of the master's pardonable right to fit into his own home decor MARY HAINES' living room is not like that It would be thought a comfortable room by a man This, without sacrificing its own subtle, feminine charm Above the fireplace, there is a charming portrait of Mary's children—a girl of 11, a boy of 5 or 6 Right, a door to the living quarters Left, another to the hall Center, a sofa, arm-chair, tea-table group, and in the good light from the window, a bridge-table group

As the curtain rises JANE, a pretty and quite correct little Irish-American maid, is arranging the tea table FOUR WOMEN are playing bridge in a smoking-car cloud of smoke They are

NANCY, who is sharp, but not acid, sleek but not smart, a worldly and yet virginal 35 And her partner—

PEGGY, who is pretty, sweet, 25 PEGGY's character has not, will never quite, "jell" And—

SYLVIA, who is glassy, elegant, feline, 34 And her partner—

EDITH, who is a sloppy, expensively dressed (currently, by Lane Bryant) matron of 33 or 34 Indifferent to everything but self, EDITH is incapable of either deliberate maliciousness or spontaneous generosity

SYLVIA So I said to Howard, "What do you expect me to do? Stay home and darn your socks? What do we all have money for? Why do we keep servants?"

NANCY You don't keep them long, God knows—(Placing the pack of cards) Yours, Peggy

PEGGY Isn't it Mrs Potter's? I opened with four spades (SYLVIA firmly places the pack before PEGGY PEGGY wrong again, deals)

SYLVIA Second hand, you did And went down a thousand (Patronizingly) Peggy, my pet, you can't afford it

PEGGY I can too, Sylvia I'm not a pauper

SYLVIA If your bridge doesn't improve, you soon will be

NANCY Oh, shut up, Sylvia She's only playing till Mary comes down

SYLVIA (*querulously*) Jane, what's Mrs Haines doing up there?

JANE (*reproachfully*) It's that lingene woman you sent her, Mrs Fowler

SYLVIA I didn't expect Mrs Haines to buy anything I was just trying to get rid of the creature (*JANE exits*)
Peggy, bid

PEGGY Oh, mine? By

SYLVIA (*looking at PEGGY*) She won't concentrate

NANCY She's in love, bless her After the child's been mamed as long as you girls, she may be able to concentrate on vital matters like bridge

SYLVIA (*bored*) Another lecture on the Modern Woman?

NANCY At the drop of a hat By

SYLVIA I consider myself a perfectly good wife I've sacrificed a lot for Howard Fowler—two spades I devote as much time to my children as any of my friends

NANCY Except Mary

SYLVIA Oh, Mary, of course Mary is an exception to all of us

NANCY Quite right (*They are waiting for PEGGY again*) Peggy?

PEGGY (*uncertainly*) Two no trumps?
(*EDITH rises suddenly Plainly, she feels squeamish*)

SYLVIA (*wearily*) Edith, not again?

EDITH I shouldn't have eaten that alligator pear Morning sickness! I

heave the whole darn day This is positively the last time I go through this lousy business for any man! Four spades If men had to bear babies, there'd never be—

NANCY —more than one child in a family And he'd be a boy By
(*EDITH sinks on the edge of her chair, lays down her cards*)

PEGGY I wish I were having a baby We can't afford one now

SYLVIA And you'll never be able to, until you know Culbertson (*Arranging EDITH's cards*) Honestly, Edith! Why didn't you show a slam?

EDITH (*rising hurriedly*) Oh, I have got to unswallow Wait till you've had three, Peggy You'd wish you'd never gotten past the bees and flowers (*Exits precipitously*)

NANCY (*disgusted*) Poor, frightened, bewildered madonna!

SYLVIA I'm devoted to Edith Potter But she does get me down You'd think she had a hard time Dr Briggs says she's like shelling peas She ought to go through what I went through Nobody knows!

NANCY No clubs, partner?

SYLVIA So when Cynthia came, I had a Caesarian You should see my stomach— It's a slam!

NANCY Are you sure?

SYLVIA Got the king, Peggy? (*PEGGY obligingly plays the king*) Thanks, dear, it's a slam And the rubber (*Rises, lights a fresh cigarette, goes to armchair and perches*) But I've kept my figure I must say, I don't

blame Phelps Potter for playing around

PEGGY Oh, does her husband ?

SYLVIA Oh, Phelps has made passes at all us girls I do think it's bad taste for a man to try to make his wife's friends, *especially* when he's bald and fat I told him once, "Phelps Potter," I said, "the next time you grab at me, I'm going straight to Edith "

NANCY And did you?

SYLVIA Certainly not I wouldn't say anything to hurt Edith for the world Well, you can't blame the men But I'll say one thing for Edith She's not as dumb as *some* of my friends She's on to her husband

PEGGY (*bravely*) Do you think he is on to her?

SYLVIA What do you mean?

PEGGY If he could only hear her talk about him!

SYLVIA Listen, Peggy, do we know how men talk about us when we're not around?

NANCY I've heard rumors

SYLVIA Exactly Peggy, you haven't been married long enough to form a private opinion of your husband

PEGGY Well, if I had one, I'd keep it to myself Do you think I'd tell anybody in the world about the quarrels John and I have over money? I'd be too proud!

(*Enter EDITH Goes to tea table, and gathers a handful of sandwiches*)

SYLVIA All over, dear?

EDITH Oh, that was a false alarm What happened?

SYLVIA Only a slam, dear You do underbid

EDITH I'll bet you had me on the pan

SYLVIA I never say behind my friends' backs what I won't say to their faces I said you ought to diet

EDITH There's no use dieting in my condition I've got to wait until I can begin from scratch Besides, I've got the most wonderful cook She was with Mary She said Mary let her go because she was too extravagant I think this cook Mary has is too, too homey (*Examines sandwich*) Water cress I'd just as soon eat my way across a front lawn

SYLVIA I think Mary's gone off terribly this winter Have you noticed those deep lines, here? (*Draws her finger around her mouth*)

NANCY Smiling lines Tragic, aren't they?

SYLVIA Perhaps they *are* Maybe a woman's headed for trouble when she begins to get too-smug

NANCY Smug? Don't you mean, happy?

PEGGY Mr Haines adores her so!

SYLVIA (*smickering and flashing EDITH a significant glance*) Yes, doesn't he?

NANCY (*coldly*) You just can't bear it, Sylvia, can you?

SYLVIA Bear what?

NANCY Mary's happiness It gets you down

SYLVIA Nancy Blake, if there's one thing I can say for myself, I've never been jealous of another woman Why should I be jealous of Mary?

NANCY Because she's contented Contented to be what she is

SYLVIA Which is what?

NANCY A woman

EDITH And what, in the name of my revolting condition, are we?

NANCY Females

SYLVIA Really And what are you, pet?

NANCY What nature abhors I'm—a virgin —a frozen asset

EDITH I wish I were a virgin again The only fun I ever had was holding out on Phelps Nancy, you ought to thank God every night you don't have to make sacrifices for some man

PEGGY I wish I could make a little money wringing, the way you do, Miss Blake

NANCY If you wrote the way I do, that's just what you'd make

SYLVIA You're not exactly a popular author, are you, dear?

NANCY Not with you Well, good news, Sylvia My book is finished and once again I'm about to leave your midst.

PEGGY Oh, I wish we could afford to travel Where do you go this time, Miss Blake?

NANCY Africa, shooting

SYLVIA Well, darling, I don't blame you I'd rather face a tiger any day than the sort of things the critics said about your last book
(Enter MARY She is a lovely woman in her middle thirties She is what most of us think our happily married daughters are like She is carrying several white boxes)

MARY Sorry, girls (Teasing) Sylvia, must you always send me weebegone creatures like that lingerie woman? It's been a very expensive half hour for me

PEGGY (looking at SYLVIA) For me too, Mrs Haines

MARY (laughing) Nonsense, Peggy, you were playing for me Here (Hands PEGGY a box) Don't open it now It's a bed-jacket Or a tea cozy Or something padded I wouldn't know I was crying so hard

SYLVIA You didn't believe that woman's sob story?

MARY Of course I did (She really didn't) Anyway, she's a lot worse off than you and I (Putting down another box) Edith, wee garments—

EDITH Darling, how sweet! (It comes over her again) Oh, my God! I'm sick as a cat (Sits)

SYLVIA It's a girl Girls always make you sicker

NANCY Even before they're born?

EDITH I don't care what it is I've lost everything including my curiosity Why did God make it take nine months?

NANCY (*helpfully*) It takes an elephant seven years

EDITH I wish I were an elephant I'll look like one anyway before I'm finished And it would be heaven not to worry for seven years

MARY (*laughing*) Oh, Edith, it is rather trying But when it's all over, isn't it the grandest thing in the world to have them?

EDITH Well, I'd love mine just as much if they came out of cabbages

NANCY And I dare say your husband would hardly notice the difference

JANE (*entering with teakettle*) Ma'am, Mr Haines would like to speak to you on the phone

MARY Oh, I can feel what it is in my bones, Jane (*To the others*) Stephen's going to be kept at the office again tonight (*Exits*)

SYLVIA Give him my love, pet

MARY (*offstage*) I will

SYLVIA (*she never lets anything pass*) Nancy, you couldn't be more wrong about me and Mary

NANCY Snll rankling?

SYLVIA Jealous? As a matter of fact, I'm sorry for her

NANCY Oh-ho? Why?

SYLVIA (*mysteriously*). Well, for all we know she may be living in a fool's paradise with Stephen

NANCY Let's check that one for a moment, Sylvia Jane, are the children in?

JANE Yes, Miss Just back from the Park

(*EDITH rises—SYLVIA, in pantomime, signals her not to leave room This is not lost on NANCY For a moment she hesitates at the door*)

PEGGY Oh, I'd love to see Mrs. Haines' little girl, Miss Blake—

NANCY (*following PEGGY*) Come along, child Anyway, it's our turn to go on the pan But we don't have to worry You've got a poor man I've got no man at all (*They exit*)

EDITH (*goes to tea table—pours two cups JANE empties ash trays*) This is positively the last time I play bridge with Nancy She never misses a chance to get in a dig What has a creature like her got but her friends? (*JANE exits, closing door, left SYLVIA stealthily closes door, right*) The way she kept at you about Mary made me so nervous, I thought I'd scream And in my condition—

SYLVIA Edith, I've got to tell you! I'll burst if I wait!

EDITH I knew you had something! (*She brings her well-laden plate and teacup and settles herself happily beside SYLVIA on the sofa*)

SYLVIA You'll die!

EDITH Mary?

SYLVIA No, Stephen Guess!

EDITH You couldn't mean ?

SYLVIA I swear!

SYLVIA (*nodding*) Stephen Haines is cheating on Mary!

EDITH (*thrilled*) Someone we know?

EDITH I don't believe you, is it true?

SYLVIA Wait till you hear (*Now she is into it*) You know I go to Michael's for my hair You ought to go, pet I despise whoever does yours Well, there's the most wonderful new manicurist there (*Shows her scarlet nails*) Isn't that divine? Jungle Red—

SYLVIA No! That's what's so awful about it She's a friend of this manicurist Oh, it wouldn't be so bad if Stephen had picked someone in his own class But a blonde floose!

EDITH But how did Stephen ever meet a girl like that?

SYLVIA How do men ever meet girls like that? That's what they live for, the rats!

EDITH Simply divine Go on

SYLVIA It all came out in the most extraordinary way, this morning I tried to ge* you on the phone—

EDITH But—

EDITH I was in the tub Go on

SYLVIA I can't go into all the details, now They're utterly fantastic—

SYLVIA 'This manicurist, she's marvellous, was doing my nails I was looking through *Vogue*, the one with Mary in the Beaux Arts Ball costume—

EDITH You suppose Mary knows?

EDITH —in that white wig that flattered her so much?

SYLVIA Mary's the kind who couldn't help showing it

SYLVIA (*nodding*) Well, this manicurist "Oh, Mrs Fowler," she said, "is that that Mrs Haines who's so awfully rich?"

EDITH (*nodding, her mouth full of her third cake*) No self-control Well, she's bound to find out If a woman's got any instincts, she feels when her husband's off the reservation I know I would

EDITH Funny how people like that think people like us are awfully rich

SYLVIA Of course you do, darling Not Mary— (*Rises, and walks about the room, wrestling with MARY's sad problem*) If only there were some way to warn her!

SYLVIA I forget what she said next You know how those creatures are, babble, babble, babble, babble, and never let up for a minute! When suddenly she said "I know the girl who's being kept by Mr Haines!"

EDITH (*horrified, following her*) Sylvia! You're not going to tell her?

SYLVIA Certainly not I'd die before I'd be the one to hurt her like that!

EDITH No!

EDITH Couldn't someone shut that manicurist up?

SYLVIA A good story like that? A lot those girls care whose life they ruin

EDITH Isn't it a dirty trick?

SYLVIA Isn't it foul? It's not as though only Mary's friends knew We could keep our mouths shut

EDITH I know plenty that I never breathe about my friends' husbands!

SYLVIA So do I! (*They exchange a sudden glance of sharp suspicion*) Anyway, the whole thing's disgustingly unfair to Mary I feel like a disloyal skunk, just knowing about it—

EDITH I adore her—

SYLVIA I worship her She's my dearest friend in all the world— (*Voices, offstage They sit down at the card table and begin to play solitaire hastily Enter NANCY and PEGGY*)

NANCY Well, Sylvia, feeling better?

SYLVIA (*innocently*) Meaning what?

NANCY Must've been choice. You both look so relaxed

SYLVIA Nancy, were you listening at that door?

PEGGY Oh, Mrs Fowler, we were in the nursery
(*MARY enters*)

SYLVIA (*quickly*) Well, darling, how is Stephen, the old dear? And did you give him my love?

MARY I did Stephen's not so well. Sylvia

SYLVIA Oh? What's the trouble?

MARY Nervous indigestion That's why I have such a plain cook now

EDITH Phelps has had indigestion for years You should hear that man rumble in the night Like a truck on cobblestones

SYLVIA There's nothing—worrying Stephen?

MARY Oh no, he's just been working late He's not coming home tonight Oh, I wish— (*Abruptly, with an indulgent laugh*) Well, man's love is of man's life a thing apart, 'tis woman's whole—et cetera

SYLVIA Are you sure it's work, darling, and not a beautiful blonde?

MARY Stephen? (*Laughing, and perhaps a little smugly, too*) Oh, Sylvia

EDITH (*afraid that SYLVIA will go too far*) Sylvia, let's play!

SYLVIA Stephen's a very attractive man

MARY Isn't he? I can't imagine why he hasn't deserted me for some glamorous creature long ago

NANCY (*alarmed*) Mary, you do sound smug

MARY Oh, let me be, Nancy How can you be too sure of what you believe in most?

SYLVIA I wouldn't be sure of the Apostle Paul I always tell Howard, "If you ever manage to make a fool of me I'll deserve what I get"

NANCY You certainly will (*Faces SYLVIA squarely*) Now, Sylvia, let's have it

SYLVIA Have what?

NANCY Just what did you mean when you said Mary was living in a fool's paradise?

MARY What?

SYLVIA (*angrily*) Nancy, don't be absurd (*A pause Then, wriggling out of it*) Oh, Mary, I was just trying to make a typical Nancy Blake wisecrack about marriage I said, "A woman's paradise is always a fool's paradise!"

MARY That's not bad, is it, Nancy? Well, Sylvia, whatever I'm living in, I like it Nancy, cut

SYLVIA (*examines her nails minutely, suddenly shows them to MARY*) Mary, how do you like that?

NANCY (*not looking*) Too, too adorable

SYLVIA You can't imagine how it stays on I get it at Michael's—you ought to go, Mary!

EDITH (*protestingly*) Oh, Sylvia!

SYLVIA A wonderful new manicurist Olga's her name She's marvelous

EDITH Will you cut, Sylvia?

SYLVIA Look, Jungle Red

NANCY Looks as if you'd been tearing at somebody's throat

SYLVIA I'll be damned, Nancy, if I'll let you ride me any more!

MARY Now, Sylvia, Nancy's just being clever too

SYLVIA She takes a crack at everything about me Even my nails!

MARY (*laughing*) Well, I like it I really do! It's new and smart (*Pats her hand*) Michael's, Olga, Jungle Red? I'll remember that (*Cuts cards*) You and I, Sylvia I feel lucky today

SYLVIA (*with a sweet, pitying smile*) Do you, darling? Well, you know what they say, "Lucky in cards!"

CURTAIN

SCENE II

An afternoon, a few days later A hairdressing booth in Michael's An elegantly functional cubbyhole Right, a recessed mirror in the wall Left, from the high partition pole, a curtain to the floor The rear wall is a plain partition Center, a swivel hairdressing chair Above it from an aluminum tree, the hanging thicket of a permanent-wave machine In the wall, gadgets for curling irons, electric outlets which connect with wires to the drying machine, the hand drier, the manicurists' table-light, stools for the pedicurist, the manicurist, OLGA

As the curtain rises, the booth is, to put it mildly, full

MRS WAGSTAFF, a fat, elderly woman, is in the chair, undergoing the punishment of a permanent Wires and clamps, Medusa-like, rise from her head to the cap of the machine

OLGA, at her right, is doing her nails Her fat bare feet rest in the lap of the PEDICURIST The FIRST HAIRDRESSER cools her steaming locks with a hand-drier The SECOND HAIRDRESSER, watch in hand, fiddles with the wires, times the operation When the machine is working, a small, red light glows among the wires

MRS WAGSTAFF, apparently inured to public execution, smokes, reads a magazine on her lap, occasionally nibbles a sandwich which the MANICURIST passes her from a tray near her instruments The drier, whenever it is on, makes a loud noise, drowning out voices, which must be harshly raised above it Now the drier is on, the voices loud

MRS WAGSTAFF It's burning my neck!

the colored maid, EUPHIE She clutches the shoulder of the mud mask)

SECOND HAIRDRESSER Be brave! One minute more!

EUPHIE Mustn't talk, ma'am You'll crack yo'self (Exit MUD-MASK followed by EUPHIE)

MRS WAGSTAFF (in pain) O-o-oo!

FIRST HAIRDRESSER It's going to be so worth it, Mrs Wagstaff

MRS WAGSTAFF Who was it?

MRS WAGSTAFF My ears!

SECOND HAIRDRESSER Be brave!

MRS WAGSTAFF O-o-o-o! My nerves — Oo—my God! (To PEDICURIST) My sandwich— (OLGA hands her sandwich)

FIRST HAIRDRESSER Mrs Phipps— (Switches off the drier Now they all lower their voices to a normal pitch) There, dear, the agony's over (They take the permanent clamps off MRS WAGSTAFF's hair A drier is on in the next booth A voice is heard offstage screaming above it)

SECOND HAIRDRESSER Ten seconds We must suffer to be beautiful (The curtain parts, a FIGURE in flowing white half-enters It is, judging by the voice, a woman, but its face is completely obliterated by a mud-mask)

VOICE —so I feel awful I ate a lobster at the opening of the Ritz— (The drier goes off)

OLGA (to MRS WAGSTAFF) Mrs Mordie Barnes She's been in the hospital It wasn't ptomaine at all It was a mis—

MUD-MASK Oh, pardon—I thought I was in here Why, hello, Mrs Wagstaff (Coily) Guess who I am? (A second FACE appears over this intruder's shoulder At first, it looks like another mud-mask. It's not It's

SECOND HAIRDRESSER Olga! She'll hear you—

MRS WAGSTAFF (thoughtfully). I think I'll have a mud-mask

SECOND HAIRDRESSER (*calling out-side*) Euphie! Tell the desk Mrs Wagstaff's working in a mud!

MRS WAGSTAFF (*enviously*) Mrs Phipps has such a lovely skin

FIRST HAIRDRESSER Not lovelier than yours, Mrs Wagstaff

CHORUS (**SECOND HAIRDRESSER**, **OLGA**, **PEDICURIST**) Oh, yours is lovely! Why, not nearly as lovely! Lovelier than yours?

MRS WAGSTAFF (*cooly*) I do think it's rather good for a woman my age

FIRST HAIRDRESSER You talk as if you were an old woman, dear

MRS WAGSTAFF (*lying*) I'm 42

SECOND HAIRDRESSER Mustn't tell anyone You don't look a day over 35!

CHORUS (**SECOND HAIRDRESSER**, **PEDICURIST**, **OLGA**) Why, no one would believe it! Why, not a day! Oh, you don't look it!

SECOND HAIRDRESSER —now you've gotten so much slimmer!

MRS WAGSTAFF I have slimmed down, haven't I?

CHORUS (**PEDICURIST**, **OLGA**, **FIRST HAIRDRESSER**) Oh, thin as a shadow! Why, terribly thin! Oh, just right, now!

MRS WAGSTAFF (*admiring her nail polish*) That's lovely

OLGA Jungle Red Everybody loves it Do you know Mrs Howard Fowler?

PEDICURIST (*rising, gathering up her things*) Don't put your stockings on yet, Mrs Wagstaff, you'll smear your beautiful big toe— (*Exits*)

OLGA They say Mr Fowler made a fortune in some stock But one of the ladies Mrs Fowler sent in was telling me Mr Fowler does like to drink! Only the other day—

FIRST HAIRDRESSER (*sharply*) We're ready now, Mrs Wagstaff (*Gets MRS WAGSTAFF up*) We'll unwind you in the shampoo (*Calling*) Euphie!

SECOND HAIRDRESSER (*taking MRS. WAGSTAFF to door*) This way, dear How does your permanent feel? And it's going to look lovely, too— (**SECOND HAIRDRESSER** *herds MRS WAGSTAFF out of the booth*, **MRS WAGSTAFF** *walking on her heels, her toes still wadded with cotton* Enter **EUPHIE**, who, during the ensuing dialogue, cleans up the debris on the floor of the booth)

OLGA That old gasoline truck! Fifty-two if she's a day!

FIRST HAIRDRESSER One more permanent and she won't have a hair left on her head

OLGA There's plenty on her upper lip

EUPHIE She sho' does shed, don't she?

OLGA Any woman who's fool enough to marry a man ten years younger! Know what a client told me? Her husband's a pansy! (**HAIRDRESSER** *exits followed by OLGA*)

SECOND HAIRDRESSER (*entering*) Ready?

EUPHIE Yes, ma'am
(*The SECOND HAIRDRESSER holds back the curtain*)

MARY (*offstage*) So I woke up this morning and decided for no reason at all to change the way— (*She enters, followed by NANCY*) I do my hair
(*Exit EUPHIE*)

SECOND HAIRDRESSER. Mr Michael will be ten minutes, ma'am Anyone in particular for your manicure?

MARY Who does Mrs Fowler's nails?

HAIRDRESSER Olga I'll see (*Exits*)

NANCY God, I'd love to do Mrs Fowler's nails, right down to the wrist, with a nice big buzz saw

MARY Sylvia's all right She's a good friend underneath

NANCY Underneath what?

MARY Nancy, you don't humor your friends enough

NANCY So that's the big idea coming here? You're humoring Sylvia?

MARY Oh, you did hurt her I had it all over again at lunch (*She catches a glimpse of herself in the mirror*) Nancy, am I getting old?

NANCY Who put that in your head? Sylvia?

MARY Tell me the truth

NANCY Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and twaddle to that effect

MARY But it's such a scary feeling when you see those little wrinkles creeping in

NANCY Time's little mice

MARY And that first gleam of white in your hair It's the way you'd feel about autumn if you knew there'd never be another spring—

NANCY (*abruptly*) There's only one tragedy for a woman

MARY Growing old?

NANCY Losing her man

MARY That's why we're all so afraid of growing old

NANCY Are you afraid?

MARY Well, I was very pretty when I was young I never thought about it twice then Now I know it's why Stephen loved me

NANCY Smart girl

MARY Now I think about it all the time

NANCY Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds Shakespeare

MARY Well, he told me, on my birth day, I'd always look the same to him

NANCY Nice present No jewels?

MARY It rained that day He brought me a bottle of perfume called "Summer Rain"

NANCY How many ounces?

MARY Nancy, you've never been in love

NANCY Says who?

MARY (*surprised*) Have you?

NANCY Yes.

MARY You never told me

NANCY You never asked— (*Wistfully*) Neither did he (*OLGA enters with fresh bowl of water*) Here, innocent (*Gives a book to MARY*) The book my readers everywhere have been waiting for with such marked apathy

MARY "All the Dead Ladies"?

NANCY Originally called, "From the Silence of the Womb" My publisher thought that would make too much noise

MARY What's it about? (*OLGA begins to file MARY's nails*)

NANCY Women I dislike "Ladies"—

MARY Oh, Nancy!

OLGA Don't soak it yet (*Taking MARY's hand out of the water*)

NANCY No good? Too bad It's a parting shot I'm off

MARY Off?

NANCY Africa.

MARY But not today?

NANCY I knew if I told you you'd scurry around and do things A party Steamer baskets of sour fruit Not nearly as sour as the witty cables your girl friends would send me— So don't move No tears For my sake—just soak it? Good-bye, Mary—

MARY Good-bye, Nancy I'll miss you

NANCY I doubt it. Practically nobody ever misses a clever woman. (*Exits*)

OLGA Funny, isn't she?

MARY She's a darling

OLGA (*filing MARY's nails*) She's a writer? How do those writers think up those plots? I guess the plot part's not so hard to think up as the end I guess anybody's life'd make a interesting plot if it had a interesting end—Mrs Fowler sent you in? (*MARY, absorbed in her book, nods*) She's sent me three clients this week Know Mrs Herbert Parrish that was Mrs Malcolm Leeds? Well, Mrs Parrish was telling me herself about her divorce Seems Mr Parrish came home one night with lipstick on his undershirt Said he always explained everything before But *that* was something he just wasn't going to try to explain Know Mrs Potter? She's awful pregnant—

MARY (*she wants to read*) I know

OLGA Soak it, please (*Puts MARY's hand in water Begins on other hand*) Know Mrs Stephen Haines?

MARY What? Why, yes, I—

OLGA I guess Mrs Fowler's told you about that! Mrs Fowler feels awfully sorry for her

MARY (*laughing*) Oh, she does! Well, I don't I—

OLGA You would if you knew this girl

MARY What girl?

OLGA. This Crystal Allen.

MARY Crystal Allen?

OLGA Yes, you know The girl who's living with Mr Haines (*MARY starts violently*) Don't you like the file? Mrs Potter says it sets her unborn child's teeth on edge

MARY (*indignant*) Whoever told you such a thing?

OLGA Oh, I thought you knew Didn't Mrs Fowler—?

MARY No—

OLGA Then you will be interested You see, Crystal Allen is a friend of mine She's really a terrible man-trap Soak it, please (*MARY, dazed, puts her hand in the dish*) She's behind the perfume counter at Saks' So was I before I got fi—left That's how she met him

MARY Stephen Haines?

OLGA Yeah It was a couple a months ago Us girls wasn't busy It was an awful rainy day, I remember So this gentleman walks up to the counter He was the serious type, nice-looking, but kind of thin on top Well, Crystal nab's him "I want some perfume," he says "May I awsk what type of woman for?" Crystal says, very Ritzy That didn't mean a thing She was going to sell him Summer Rain, our feature anyway "Is she young?" Crystal says "No," he says, sort of embarrassed "Is she the glamorous type?" Crystal says "No, thank God," he says "Thank God?" Crystal says and bats her eyes She's got those eyes which run up and down a man like a searchlight Well, she puts perfume on her palm and in the

crook of her arm for him to smell. So he got to smelling around and I guess he liked it Because we heard him tell her his name, which one of the girls recognized from Cholly Knickerbocker's column—Gee, you're nervous—Well, it was after that I left I wouldn't of thought no more about it But a couple of weeks ago I stopped by where Crystal lives to say hello And the landlady says she'd moved to the kind of house where she could entertain her gentleman friend—"What gentleman friend?" I says "Whv, that Mr Haines that she's had up in her room all hours of the night," the landlady says—Did I hurt? (*MARY draws her hand away*) One coat, or two? (*Picks up a red bottle*)

MARY None (*Rises and goes to the chair, where she has left her purse*)

OLGA But I thought that's what you came for? All Mrs Fowler's friends—

MARY I think I've gotten what all Mrs Fowler's friends came for (*Puts coin on the table*)

OLGA (*picks up coin*) Oh, thanks—Well, good-bye I'll tell her you were in, Mrs —?

MARY Mrs Stephen Haines

OLGA Mrs —? Oh, gee, gee! Gee, Mrs Haines—I'm sorry! Oh, isn't there something I can do?

MARY Stop telling that story!

OLGA Oh, sure, sure, I will!

MARY And please, don't tell anyone— (*Her voice breaks*) that you told it to me—

OLGA Oh, I won't, gee, I promise! Gee, that would be kind of humiliating for you! (Defensively) But in a way, Mrs Haines, I'm kinda glad you know Crystal's a terrible girl—I mean, she's terribly clever And she's terribly pretty, Mrs Haines—I mean, if I was you I wouldn't waste no time getting Mr Haines away from her—(MARY turns abruptly away) I mean, now you know, Mrs Haines! (OLGA eyes the coin in her hand distastefully, suddenly puts it down on

the table and exits MARY, alone, stares blankly in the mirror, then suddenly, focusing on her image, leans forward, searching her face between her trembling hands A drier goes on in the next booth A shrill voice rises above its drone)

VOICE —Not too hot! My sinus! So she said "I wouldn't want anybody in the world to know," and I said "My dear, you know you can trust me!"

CURTAIN

SCENE III

An hour later MARY's boudoir Charming, of course A door to bedroom, right A door to the hall, left A chaise-longue, next to it, a table with books, flowers, a telephone A dressing table

As the curtain rises, MARY is discovered on the chaise-longue, trying to read JANE enters from the hall She is upset about something She keeps daubing at her eyes.

MARY See, Jane

JANE It's coming, ma'am

MARY My mother will be here in a few minutes A cup for her

JANE Yes, ma'am (Sniffing) Ma'am—

MARY And tell cook please, dinner on time We're going to the theatre Mr Haines likes to be there for the curtain I'll wear my old black, Jane

JANE (looking nervously at the door behind her) Yes, ma'am

MARY No, I'll wear my new blue, Jane

JANE Ma'am, it's cook She wants to see you (Defensively) It's about me She says I—

MARY Later, Jane

JANE Don't you believe a word she says ma'am It's all his fault

MARY (aware of JANE's distress for the first time) Whose fault?

JANE Her husband's Ford's

MARY (surprised) What's the matter with Ford? He's a very good but—

JANE Oh, he does his work, ma'am
But you don't know how he is in the
pantry Always kidding around with
us girls He don't mean any harm,
but cook—

(Enter COOK abruptly with MARY's
tea tray She is a fat, kind woman,
with a strong Scandinavian accent
At the moment she is very mad)

COOK Afternoon, ma'am (Glaring
at JANE) I'd like to talk to you alone,
ma'am

JANE I told you, it isn't my fault

COOK You led him on!

JANE I didn't (Bursting into tears)
I've been with Mrs Haines seven
years She knows I never make trou-
ble downstairs (Exits to hall)

MARY Yes, Ingrid?

COOK Ma'am, you're the nicest I ever
had But I go I got to get Ford away
from that bad girl

MARY (very firmly) Jane is not a
bad girl

COOK (bursts into tears) Oh, course
she ain't He was always like that!
Sometimes I could die, for the shame!

MARY (kindly) I'll send him away
You can stay

COOK (more soberly) No, I don't do
that, ma'am

MARY I'll give you a hundred dol-
lars That's more than half of what
you make together

COOK Thank you, ma'am We both
go

MARY Is that sensible?

COOK No It's plain dumb

MARY Then why?

COOK (she pauses, rocking from foot
to foot) I guess nobody understand
Sure it was no good to marry him
My mother told me he's a lady-killer
Don't marry them, she said His wife
is the lady he kills Oh, he's terrible
But except for women he's a good
man He always says, "Ingrid, you
take the money You manage good"
Oh, he don't want nobody but me for
his wife! That's an awful big thing,
ma'am

MARY Is that the thing that really
matters?

COOK With women like us, yes
ma'am— You give us references!
(MARY nods) And don't say noth-
ing about his ways?

MARY I won't

COOK (moving to the door) Black
bean soup, a fricassee, fried sweets
and apple pie for dinner, ma'am—
(She opens the door JANE has been
eavesdropping)

COOK (in a low, fierce voice) Slut!
(Exit COOK)

JANE (entering with extra cup on
tray) Did you hear what she called
me, Mrs Haines?

MARY Please, Jane

JANE (cheerfully) I'd rather be that
any day than have some man make
a fool of me!

(Enter MISS FORDYCE. She is a raw-

boned, capable English spinster of 32)

MISS FORDYCE May I see you, Mrs Haines?

MARY Of course, Miss Fordyce

MISS FORDYCE It's about little Mary—Really, Mrs Haines, you'll have to talk to your child. She's just smacked her little brother, hard. Pure temper

MARY What did little Stevie do to her, Miss Fordyce?

MISS FORDYCE Well, you see, it happened while I was down getting my tea. When I came up, she'd had such a tantrum, she'd made herself ill. She positively refuses to discuss the incident with me. But I'm quite sure the dear boy hadn't done a thing.

MARY You're very apt to take the boy's side, Miss Fordyce.

MISS FORDYCE Not at all. But in England, Mrs Haines, our girls are not so wretchedly spoiled. After all, this is a man's world. The sooner our girls are taught to accept the fact gracefully—

MARY (*gently*) Send her in to me, Miss Fordyce. (*Exit MISS FORDYCE*) Oh, Jane, I don't understand it. Miss Fordyce really prefers Mary, but she insists we all make a little god of Stevie. (*Exits to bedroom, leaving the door open*.)

JANE Them English ones always hold out for the boys. But they say since the War, ma'am, there's six women over there to every man. Competition is something fierce! Over here, you can treat the men the way they deserve—Men aren't so scarce

(*Enter LITTLE MARY. She is a broad-browed, thoughtful, healthy little girl, physically well developed for her age*.)

LITTLE MARY Where's Mother?

JANE You're going to catch it. Smacking your little brother. (*Mimicking MISS FORDYCE*) Such a dear, sweet little lad—shame. (*LITTLE MARY does not answer*) I'll bet you wish you were Mother's girl, instead of Daddy's girl today, don't you? (*LITTLE MARY doesn't answer*) What's the matter, the cat got your tongue? (*Enter MARY, wearing a negligée*.)

MARY Hello, darling—Aren't you going to kiss me? (*LITTLE MARY doesn't move*) What red eyes!

LITTLE MARY I was mad. I threw up. When you throw up, doesn't it make you cry?

MARY (*smiling*) Stevie tease you? (*LITTLE MARY, embarrassed, looks at JANE. JANE snickers, takes the hint and goes out*) Well, darling?

LITTLE MARY Mother, I don't know how to begin.

MARY (*sitting on the chaise-longue, and putting out her hand*) Come here. (*LITTLE MARY doesn't budge*) Would you rather wait until tonight and tell Dad?

LITTLE MARY (*horrified*) Oh, Mother, I couldn't tell him! (*Fiercely*) And I'd be killed to death before I'd tell skinny old Miss Fordyce—

MARY That's not the way for my dear little girl to talk.

LITTLE MARY (*setting her jaw*). I don't want to be a dear little girl (*She suddenly rushes to her mother's outstretched arms in tears*) Oh, Mother dear, Mother dear!

MARY Baby, what?

LITTLE MARY What brother said!

MARY What did he say, the wretched boy?

LITTLE MARY (*disentangling herself*) He said I had bumps!

MARY Bumps? You don't mean mumps?

LITTLE MARY No, bumps He said I was covered with disgusting bumps!

MARY (*alarmed*) Mary, where?

LITTLE MARY (*touching her hips and breasts with delicate, ashamed finger tips*) Here and here!

MARY Oh— (*Controlling her relieved laughter, and drawing her daughter to her side*) Of course you have bumps, darling Very pretty little bumps And you have them because—you're a little girl

LITTLE MARY (*wailing*) But, Mother dear, I don't want to be a little girl I hate girls! They're so silly, and they tattle, tattle—

MARY Not really, Mary

LITTLE MARY Yes, Mother, I know Oh, Mother, what *fun* is there to be a lady? What can a lady do?

MARY (*cheerfully*) These days, darling, ladies do all the things men do

They fly aeroplanes across the ocean, they go into politics and business—

LITTLE MARY You don't, Mother

MARY Perhaps I'm happier doing just what I do

LITTLE MARY What do you do, Mother?

MARY Take care of you and Stevie and Dad

LITTLE MARY You don't, Mother Miss Fordyce and the servants do

MARY (*teasing*) I see I'm not needed around here

LITTLE MARY (*hugging her*) Oh, Mother, I don't mean that It wouldn't be any fun at all without you But, Mother, even when the ladies *do* do things, they stop it when they get the love-dovies

MARY The what?

LITTLE MARY Like in the movies, Mother Ladies always end up so silly (*Disgusted*) Lovey-dovey, lovey-dovey all the time!

MARY Darling, you're too young to understand—

LITTLE MARY But, Mother—

MARY "But Mother, but Mother!" There's one thing a woman can do, no man can do

LITTLE MARY (*eagerly*) What?

MARY Have a child (*Tenderly*) Like you

LITTLE MARY Oh, that! Everybody knows that But is that any fun, Mother dear?

MARY Fun? No But it is—joy (*Hugging her*) Of a very special kind

LITTLE MARY (*squirming away*) Well, it's never sounded specially exciting to me—I love you, Mother But I bet you anything you like, Daddy has more fun than you! (*She slips away from MARY Then sees her mother's dispirited face, turns and kisses her warmly*) Oh, I'm sorry, Mother But you just don't understand! (*A pause*) Am I to be punished, Mother?

MARY (*she is thinking about something else*) What do you think?

LITTLE MARY I smacked him awful hard—Shall I punish myself?

MARY It will have to be pretty bad

LITTLE MARY (*solemnly*) Then I won't go down to breakfast with Daddy tomorrow, or the next day—O K, Mother?

MARY O K
(*LITTLE MARY walks, crestfallen, to the door as JANE enters LITTLE MARY sticks out her tongue*)

LITTLE MARY There's my tongue! So what? (*Exits skipping*)

JANE (*laughing*) She never lets anybody get the best of her, does she, Mrs Haines?

MARY My poor baby She doesn't want to be a woman, Jane

JANE Who does?

MARY Somehow, I've never minded it, Jane (*Enter MRS MOREHEAD She is a bourgeois aristocrat of 55 MARY rises, kisses her*)

MRS MOREHEAD Hello, child Afternoon, Jane

JANE Afternoon, Mrs Morehead. (*Exits to bedroom*)

MARY Mother, dear! (*She walks slowly to the dressing table*)

MRS MOREHEAD (*cheerfully*) Well, what's wrong? (*Sits*)

MARY (*turning*) How did you know something's wrong?

MRS MOREHEAD Your voice on the phone Is it Stephen?

MARY How did you know?

MRS MOREHEAD You sent for Mother So it must be he (*A pause*)

MARY I don't know how to begin, Mother

MRS MOREHEAD (*delighted to find that her instincts were correct*) It's a woman! Who is she?

MARY Her name is Crystal Allen She—she's a salesgirl at Saks' (*Her mother's cheerful and practical manner discourages tears, so she begins to cream and tonic her face instead*)

MRS MOREHEAD She's young and pretty, I suppose

MARY Well, yes (*Defensively*) But common

MRS MOREHEAD (*soothingly*) Of course—Stephen told you?

MARY No I—I found out—this afternoon

MRS MOREHEAD How far has it gone?

MARY He's known her about three months

MRS MOREHEAD Does Stephen know you know?

MARY (*shaking her head*) I—I wanted to speak to you first (*The tears come anyway*) Oh, Mother dear, what am I going to say to him?

MRS MOREHEAD *Nothing*

MARY Nothing?
(*Enter JANE with the new dress*)

JANE I'll give it a touch with the iron

MARY Look, Schiaparelli— (*JANE holds dress up*) It's rather trying, though, one of those tight skirts with a flared tunic—

MRS MOREHEAD Personally, I always thought you looked best in things not too extreme
(*Exit JANE*)

MARY But, Mother, you don't really mean I should say nothing?

MRS MOREHEAD I do

MARY Oh, but Mother—

MRS MOREHEAD My dear, I felt the same way twenty years ago

MARY Not Father?

MRS MOREHEAD Mary, in many ways your father was an exceptional

man (*Philosophically*) That, unfortunately, was not one of them

MARY Did you say nothing?

MRS MOREHEAD Nothing I had a wise mother, too Listen, dear, this is not a new story It comes to most wives

MARY But Stephen—

MRS MOREHEAD Stephen is a man He's been married twelve years—

MARY You mean, he's tired of me!

MRS MOREHEAD Stop crying You'll make your nose red

MARY I'm not crying (*Patting tonic on her face*) This stuff stings

MRS MOREHEAD (*going to her*) Stephen's tired of himself Tired of feeling the same things in himself year after year Time comes when every man's got to feel something new—when he's got to feel young again, just because he's growing old Women are just the same But when we get that way we change our hair dress Or get a new cook Or redecorate the house from stem to stern But a man can't do over his office, or fire his secretary Not even change the style of his hair And the urge usually hits him hardest just when he's beginning to lose his hair No, dear, a man has only one escape from his old self to see a different self—in the mirror of some woman's eyes

MARY But, Mother—

MRS MOREHEAD This girl probably means no more to him than that new dress means to you

MARY But, Mother—

MRS MOREHEAD "But Mother, but Mother!" He's not giving anything to her that belongs to you, or you would have felt that yourself long ago

MARY (*bewildered*) Oh, I always thought I would I love him so much

MRS MOREHEAD And he loves you, baby (*Drawing MARY beside her on the chaise-longue*) Now listen to me Go away somewhere for a month or two There's nothing like a good dose of another woman to make a man appreciate his wife Mother knows!

MARY But, there's never been a lie between us before

MRS MOREHEAD You mean, there's never been a *silence* between you before Well, it's about time Keeping still, when you *ache* to talk, is about the only sacrifice spoiled women like us ever have to make

MARY But, I'd forgive him—

MRS MOREHEAD Forgive him? (*Impatiently*) For what? For being a man? Accuse him, and you'll never get a chance to forgive him He'd have to justify himself—

MARY How can he?

MRS MOREHEAD (*sighing*) He can't and he *can* Don't make him try Either way you'd lose him And remember, dear, it's being together at the end that really matters (*Rising*)

One more piece of motherly advice: Don't confide in your girl friends!

MARY. I think they all know

MRS MOREHEAD They think you don't? (*MARY nods*) Leave it that way If you let them advise you, they'll see to it, in the name of friendship, that you lose your husband and your home I'm an old woman, dear, and I know my sex (*Moving to the door*) I'm going right down this minute and get our tickets

MARY Our—tickets?

MRS MOREHEAD You're taking me to Bermuda, dear My throat's been awfully bad I haven't wanted to worry you, but my doctor says—

MARY Oh, Mother darling! Thank you!

MRS MOREHEAD Don't thank me, dear It's rather—*nice* to have you need Mother again (*Exits The telephone rings MARY answers it*)

MARY Yes?—Oh, Stephen—Yes, dear?— (*Distressed*) Oh, Stephen! Oh, no—I'm not angry It's—it's just that I wanted to see the play Yes, I can get Mother Stephen, will you be very—late? (*It's a bit of a struggle, but she manages a cheerful voice*) Oh, it's—all right Have a good time Of course, I know it's just business—No, dear—I won't wait up—Stephen, I love— (*A click The other end has hung up JANE enters MARY turns her back Her face would belie the calmness of her voice*) Jane—The children and I will have dinner alone—

CURTAIN

SCENE IV

Two months later *A dressmaker's shop* We see two fitting booths, the same in appointment triplex pier glasses, dress racks, smoking stands, two small chairs They are divided by a mirrored partition At the rear of each booth, a curtain and a door, off a corridor, which leads to "the floor"

As the curtain rises the booth on the left is empty The other booth is cluttered with dresses Two SALESGIRLS are loading them over their arms

FIRST GIRL (*with vivid resentment against a customer who has just departed*) Well, now we can put them all back again Makes you drag out everything in the damn store, and doesn't even buy a brassiere!

SECOND GIRL And that's the kind who always needs one

FIRST GIRL This isn't her type That isn't her type I'd like to tell her what her type is

SECOND GIRL I'd like to know

FIRST GIRL It's the type that nobody gives a damn about! Gee, I'd like to work in a men's shop once What can a man try on?

SECOND GIRL Ever see a man try on hats? What they go through, you'd think a head was something peculiar (*Both GIRLS exit* FIRST SALESWOMAN enters the booth on the left, hereafter called "Mary's Booth")

FIRST SALESWOMAN Miss Myrtle, step in here a moment (*A handsome wench, in a slinky negligée, enters*)

MODEL Yes, Miss Shapiro

FIRST SALESWOMAN If I've told you once, I've told you a thousand times, when you're modelling that dress, your stomach must lead If you walk like this (*Pantomimes*) you take away all the seduction This is seduction! (*Shows MISS MYRTLE her rather unconvincing conception of a seductive walk*)

MODEL I'll try, Miss Shapiro (*Tearfully*) But if you had my appendix!

FIRST SALESWOMAN Well, Miss Myrtle, you can take your choice You will either lose your job or lose your appendix! (*Exit MODEL* In right booth, hereafter called "Crystal's Booth," enter SECOND SALESWOMAN)

SECOND SALESWOMAN (*to the FIRST and SECOND GIRLS who have returned for another load of dresses*) Quickly, please I have a client waiting (*SECOND GIRL exits with last of clothes as enter CRYSTAL, followed by SALESWOMAN* THIRD SALESWOMAN is seen crossing corridor from right to left)

(*Mary's Booth*)

FIRST SALESWOMAN (*giving little white slip to the SALESWOMAN who*

passes) Bring down Mrs Haines' fittings (*Exits, leaving booth empty*)

(*Crystal's Booth*)

SECOND SALESWOMAN Will you open a charge?

CRYSTAL (*taking off her gloves and hat*) Please

SECOND SALESWOMAN May I have the name?

CRYSTAL (*she is quite self-assured*) Allen Miss Crystal Allen The Hotel Waverly

SECOND SALESWOMAN May I have your other charges? Saks, Bergdorf, Cartier—?

CRYSTAL (*putting it on*) Oh, I'll be opening those, in the next few days—

SECOND SALESWOMAN Then may I have your bank?

CRYSTAL I've no checking account either, at the moment

(*Enter MARY in her booth, with FITTER and FIRST SALESWOMAN, who carries her try-on gown During the following scene MARY undresses, gets into gay evening gown, fits*)

FIRST SALESWOMAN (*to MARY, as they enter*) Shall we show the thing that came in while you were away?

MARY Please But I'd like to see some younger things than I usually wear

(*Crystal's Booth*)

SECOND SALESWOMAN I'm sorry, Miss Allen But we must ask for one business reference—

CRYSTAL (*lightly, she was prepared for this*) Oh, of course Mr Stephen Haines, 40 Wall He's an old friend of my family

SECOND SALESWOMAN (*writing*) That will do Mrs Haines is a very good client of ours

CRYSTAL (*unprepared for that*) Oh?

SECOND SALESWOMAN Will you try on now, or finish seeing the collection?

CRYSTAL By the way, I've never met Mrs Haines

SECOND SALESWOMAN She's lovely

CRYSTAL So—I'd rather you didn't mention to her, that I gave her husband as reference (*Beguiling*) Do you mind?

SECOND SALESWOMAN (*with a faint smile*) Oh, of course not, Miss Allen (*Indulgently*) We understand

CRYSTAL (*angrily*) Do you! What do you understand?

SECOND SALESWOMAN (*flustered*) I mean—

CRYSTAL (*very injured*) Never mind

SECOND SALESWOMAN Please, I hope you don't think I meant—

CRYSTAL (*laughing and very charming again*) Of course not Oh, it's dreadful, living in a strange city alone You have to be so careful not to do anything people can misconstrue You see, I don't know Mrs Haines yet So I'd hate to get off on the wrong foot, before I've met her socially

SECOND SALESWOMAN (*she sounds convinced*) Naturally Women are funny about little things like that

(*Mary's Booth—Enter SYLVIA*)

SYLVIA Yoo-hoo! May I come in?

MARY (*not at all pleased to see her*) Hello, Sylvia

(*In Crystal's Booth*)

SECOND SALESWOMAN What are you most interested in, Miss Allen, evening gowns?

CRYSTAL Until I—I organize my social life—I won't have much use for evening gowns

SECOND SALESWOMAN I'll show you some smart daytime things (*Deliberately toneless*) And we have very exciting negligées—(*They exit*)

(*Mary's Booth*)

(*SYLVIA circles around MARY, appraising her fitting with a critical eye*)

MARY Oh, sit down, Sylvia

SYLVIA (*to the fitter*) I don't like that underslung line (*Demonstrating on MARY*) It cuts her across the fanny Makes her look positively duck-bottomed

MARY (*pulling away*) It's so tight, Mrs Fowler can't sit down

FIRST SALESWOMAN Mrs Fowler, shall I see if your fittings are ready?

SYLVIA They'll call me

MARY (*pointing to dress FIRST SALESWOMAN has over her arm*) Have you seen that?

FIRST SALESWOMAN (*holding up dress*) It's a lovely shape on It doesn't look like a thing in the hand (*Hands dress to someone outside and calls*) Show this model, girls

SYLVIA (*settling in a chair and smoking a cigarette*) So you had a marvelous time in Bermuda

MARY I had a good rest

SYLVIA (*with unconscious humor*) Howard wants me to take a world cruise By the way, dear, how is Stephen?

MARY Splendid (*Smiling, and very glad to be able to tell SYLVIA this*) He's not nearly so busy He hasn't spent an evening—in the office, since I've come home (*Enter FIRST MODEL in an elaborate negligée MARY shakes her head, very practical*) Pretty, but I never need a thing like that—

SYLVIA Of course you don't A hot little number, for intimate afternoons (*Exit FIRST MODEL*) Howard says nobody's seen Stephen in the Club, in the afternoon, for months—

MARY (*The thought flashes across her mind that STEPHEN could, of course, have revised his extra-marital schedule, from an evening to an afternoon one, but she quickly dismisses it, STEPHEN has never let anything interfere with his hours downtown*) Don't worry so much about Stephen, Sylvia He's my concern (*Enter SECOND MODEL in a corset She is prettily fashioned from head to toe She does a great deal for the wisp of lace she wears It does nothing that nature didn't do better for her*)

SECOND MODEL This is our new one-piece lace foundation garment (*Pirouettes*) Zips up the back, and no bones (*She exits*)

SYLVIA Just that uplift, Mary, you need I always said you'd regret nursing Look at me I don't think there's another girl our age who has bazooms like mine I've taken care of them Ice water every morning, camphor at night

MARY Doesn't it smell like an old fur coat? (**PRINCESS TAMARA** *passes in the corridor*)

SYLVIA Who cares?

MARY Howard?

SYLVIA (*laughing harshly*) Howard!

FIRST SALESWOMAN (*calling out door*) Princess Tamara, show here (*Enter PRINCESS TAMARA in a very extreme evening gown She is Russian, regal, soignée*)

MARY Oh, Tamara, how lovely!

TAMARA You must have it Stephen would be amazed

MARY He certainly would It's too extreme for me

SYLVIA (*rises*) And you really haven't the figure (*Yanks at gown*) Tamara, you wear it wrong I saw it in *Vogue* (*Jerks*) Off here, and down there

TAMARA (*slapping SYLVIA's hand down*) Stop mauling me!

FIRST SALESWOMAN Princess!

TAMARA What do you know how to wear clothes?

SYLVIA I am not a model, Tamara, but no one disputes how I wear clothes!

TAMARA No one has mistaken you for Mrs Harrison Williams yet!

FIRST SALESWOMAN Princess Tamara, you'd better apologize

MARY (*to SALESWOMAN*) It's just professional jealousy They're really good friends!

SYLVIA (*maliciously*) You mean Tamara and Howard are friends

TAMARA (*disgusted at the thought*) Do you accuse me of flirting with your husband?

SYLVIA (*pleasantly*) Go as far as you can, Tamara! If I know Howard, you're wasting valuable time

TAMARA (*very angry*) Perhaps I am But perhaps somebody else is not! (*The SALESWOMAN gives her an angry shove*) You are riding for a fall-off, Sylvia dear! (*Exit TAMARA angrily, followed by SALESWOMAN*)

SYLVIA Did you get that innuendo? I'd like to see Howard Fowler put anything over on me Oh, I've always hated that girl, exploiting her title the way she does! (**CRYSTAL and SECOND SALESWOMAN enter Crystal's Booth)**

SECOND SALESWOMAN (*calling down the corridor*) Princess Tamara, show in here, to Miss Allen (**MARY's SALESWOMAN enters Mary's Booth, picking up the call**)

FIRST SALESWOMAN Girls show in Number 3 to Miss Allen

SYLVIA (*alert*) Did you say Miss Allen?

FIRST SALESWOMAN Yes

SYLVIA Not—Crystal Allen?

FIRST SALESWOMAN Why, yes—I just saw her on the floor She's so attractive I asked her name

SYLVIA (*watching MARY closely*) Oh, so Crystal Allen gets her things here? (*MARY sits down suddenly*)

FIRST SALESWOMAN She's a new client— Why, Mrs Haines, are you ill? (*MARY has caught SYLVIA's eye in the mirror SYLVIA knows now that MARY knows*)

MARY No, no I'm just tired (*TAMARA enters Crystal's Booth*)

FITTER We've kept you standing too long—

FIRST SALESWOMAN I'll get you a glass of sherry (*Exit MARY's FITTER and SALESWOMAN SYLVIA closes door*)

(*Crystal's Booth*)

CRYSTAL (*admiring TAMARA's extreme evening gown*) I'm going to have that, if I have to wear it for breakfast

SECOND SALESWOMAN Send it in here, Princess (*TAMARA exits*)

(*Mary's Booth*)

SYLVIA Mary, you do know! (*Deeply sympathetic*) Why didn't you confide in me?

MARY Sylvia, go away

SYLVIA (*fiercely*) Stephen is a louse Spending your money on a girl like that

MARY Sylvia, please mind your own affairs

SYLVIA She's already made a fool of you before all your friends And don't you think the salesgirls know who gets the bills?

MARY (*distracted*) I don't care, I tell you I don't care!

SYLVIA Oh, yes, you do (*Pointing to MARY's stricken face in the mirror*) Don't be an ostrich, Mary (*A pause*) Go in there

MARY Go in there? I'm going home. (*She rises and begins to dress*)

FIRST SALESWOMAN (*half enters*) Mrs Haines' sherry—

SYLVIA (*taking it from her, and closing the door in her face*) All right

SYLVIA You've caught her cold It's your chance to humiliate her Just say a few quiet words Tell her you'll make Stephen's life hell until he gives her up

MARY Stephen will give her up when he's tired of her

SYLVIA When he's tired of her? Look where she was six months ago Look where she is now

MARY Stephen's not in love with that girl

SYLVIA Maybe not But you don't know women like that when they get hold of a man.

MARY Sylvia, please let me decide what is best for me, and my home
(CRYSTAL, in her booth, has been undressing, admiring herself as she does so in the mirror Now she slips into a "really exciting" negligée)

SYLVIA Well, she may be a perfectly marvelous influence for Stephen, but she's not going to do your children any good

MARY (turning to her) What do you mean?

SYLVIA (mysteriously) Never mind

MARY (going to her) Tell me!

SYLVIA Far be it from me to tell you things you don't care to hear I've known this all along (Nobly) Have I uttered?

MARY (violently) What have my children to do with this?

SYLVIA (after all, MARY's asking for it) It was while you were away Edith saw them Stephen, and that tramp, and your children—together, lunching in the Park

MARY It's not true!

SYLVIA Why would Edith lie? She said they were having a hilarious time Little Stevie was eating his lunch sitting on that woman's lap She was kissing him between every bite When I heard that, I was positively heart-sick, dear! (Sees she has scored Celebrates by tossing down MARY's sherry)

(Crystal's Booth)

CRYSTAL Oh, go get that evening gown This thing bores me.

SECOND SALESWOMAN. Right away, Miss Allen (Exits)

(Mary's Booth)

SYLVIA But, as you say, dear, it's your affair, not mine (Goes to the door, looking very hurt that MARY has refused her good advice) No doubt that girl will make a perfectly good step-mamma for your children! (Exits MARY, now dressed, is alone She stares at the partition which separates her from that still unmeasured enemy to her well-ordered domesticity, "the other woman" Her common sense dictates she should go home, but now she violently experiences the ache to talk She struggles against it, then goes, bitterly determined, to the door Exits A second later, there is a knock on CRYSTAL's door CRYSTAL is alone)

CRYSTAL Come in! (Enter MARY She closes door) I beg your pardon?

MARY I am—Mrs Stephen Haines

CRYSTAL (her poise is admirable) Sorry—I don't think I know you!

MARY Please don't pretend

CRYSTAL So Stephen finally told you?

MARY No I found out
(SECOND SALESWOMAN half enters)

CRYSTAL Stay out of here! (Exit SALESWOMAN)

MARY I've known about you from the beginning

CRYSTAL Well, that's news

MARY I kept still

CRYSTAL Very smart of you
(SECOND SALESWOMAN *phantomises down the corridor, to another girl to join her* Enters MARY's booth One by one, during the rest of this scene, the FITTERS, SALESWOMEN and MODELS *tiptoe into MARY's booth and plaster their ears against the partition*)

MARY No, not smart I wanted to spare Stephen But you've gone a little too far— You've been seeing my children I won't have you touching my children!

CRYSTAL For God's sake, don't get hysterical What do I care about your children? I'm sick of hearing about them

MARY You won't have to hear about them any more When Stephen realizes how humiliating all this has been to me, he'll give you up instantly

CRYSTAL Says who? The dog in the manger?

MARY That's all I have to say

CRYSTAL That's plenty

MARY (*more calmly*) Stephen would have grown tired of you anyway

CRYSTAL (*nastily*) Speaking from your own experience? Well, he's not tired of me yet, Mrs Haines

MARY (*contemptuous*) Stephen is just amusing himself with you

CRYSTAL And he's amusing himself plenty

MARY You're very hard

CRYSTAL I can be soft—on the right occasions What do you expect me to do? Burst into tears and beg you to forgive me?

MARY I found exactly what I expected!

CRYSTAL That goes double!

MARY (*turning to the door*) You'll have to make other plans, Miss Allen

CRYSTAL (*going to her*) Listen, I'm taking my marching orders from Stephen

MARY Stephen doesn't love you

CRYSTAL He's doing the best he can in the circumstances

MARY He couldn't love a girl like you

CRYSTAL What do you think we've been doing for the past six months? Crossword puzzles? What have you got to kick about? You've got everything that matters The name, the position, the money—

MARY (*losing control of herself again*) Nothing matters to me but Stephen—!

CRYSTAL Oh, can the sob-stuff, Mrs Haines You don't think this is the first time Stephen's ever cheated? Listen, I'd break up your smug little roost if I could I have just as much right as you have to sit in a tub of butter But I don't stand a chance!

MARY I'm glad you know it

CRYSTAL Well, don't think it's just because he's fond of you—

MARY. *Fond?*

CRYSTAL You're not what's stopping him— You're just an old habit with him It's just those brats he's afraid of losing If he weren't such a sentimental fool about those kids, he'd have walked out on you years ago

MARY (*fiercely*) That's not true!

CRYSTAL Oh, yes, it is I'm telling you a few plain truths you won't get from Stephen

MARY Stephen's always told me the truth—!

CRYSTAL (*maliciously*) Well, look at the record (*A pause*) Listen, Stephen's satisfied with this arrangement So don't force any issues, unless you want plenty of trouble

MARY You've made it impossible for me to do anything else—!

CRYSTAL (*rather pleased*) Have I?

MARY You haven't played fair—!

CRYSTAL Where would any of us get if we played fair?

MARY Where do you hope to get?

CRYSTAL Right where you are, Mrs Haines!

MARY You're very confident

CRYSTAL The longer you stay in here, the more confident I get Saint or no saint, Mrs Haines, you are a hell of a dull woman!

MARY (*stares at CRYSTAL wide-eyed at the horrid thought that this may be the truth She refuses to meet the challenge She equivocates*) By your standards, I probably am I— (*Suddenly ashamed that she has allowed herself to be put so pathetically on the defensive*) Oh, why am I standing here talking to you? This is something for Stephen and me to settle! (*Exits*)

CRYSTAL (*slamming the door after her*) Oh, what the hell!

(*Mary's Booth*)

SECOND SALESWOMAN So that's what she calls meeting Mrs Haines socially

FIRST SALESGIRL Gee, I feel sorry for Mrs Haines She's so nice

NEGLIGÉE MODEL She should have kept her mouth shut Now she's in the soup

FIRST SALESWOMAN It's a terrible mistake to lay down ultimatums to a man

FIRST MODEL Allen's smart She's fixed it so anything Mr Haines says is going to sound wrong

FIRST SALESGIRL She'll get him sure

FIRST FITTER Look at that body. She's got him now

SECOND SALESGIRL You can't trust any man That's all they want

CORSET MODEL (*plaintively, her hands on her lovely hips*) What else have we got to give?

ACT TWO

SCENE I

Two weeks later. A small exercise room in Elizabeth Arden's beauty salon. Right, a mirrored wall. Rear, a door. Left, a cabinet victrola beneath an open window. On the floor, a wadded pink satin mat. As the curtain rises, SYLVIA, in a pair of shorts, is prone on the mat, describing lackadaisical arcs with her legs, to the sensuous rhythm of a tango record. The INSTRUCTRESS, a bright, pretty girl, in a pink silk bathing suit, stands above her, drilling her in a carefully cultured voice. Until the cue "stretch," the INSTRUCTRESS' lines are spoken through SYLVIA's prattle, which she is determined, for the honor of the salon, to ignore, and, if possible, to discourage. From the word "up," this is a hopeless task.

INSTRUCTRESS Up—over—up—down Up—stretch—up—together Up—stretch—up—

SYLVIA Of course, my sympathies are for Mrs Haines. They always are for a woman against a man—

INSTRUCTRESS (*louder*) Up—over—up—down Up—stretch—up—together Up—

SYLVIA But she did behave like an awful idiot—

INSTRUCTRESS Stretch—up—together Please don't try to talk, Mrs Fowler

SYLVIA But you know how some women are when they lose their heads—

INSTRUCTRESS (*grimly*) Stretch—up—together—up—

SYLVIA They do things they regret all their lives—

INSTRUCTRESS (*grabs SYLVIA's languid limb and gives it a corrective yank*) Ster-retch!

SYLVIA Ouch, my scars!

INSTRUCTRESS (*callously*) This is very good for adhesions Up—

SYLVIA (*resolutely inert*) It's got me down

INSTRUCTRESS Rest (*SYLVIA groans her relief*) And relax your diaphragm muscles, Mrs Fowler, (*Bitterly*) if you can (*Goes to the victrola, changes the record for a fox trot*)

SYLVIA Of course, I do wish Mrs Haines would make up her mind if she's going to get a divorce. It's terrible on all her friends, not knowing. Naturally, you can't ask them anywhere—

INSTRUCTRESS Of course not Now, on your side (SYLVIA rolls to her side, reclining on her elbow) Ready? Up—down—up—down— (Snaps her fingers SYLVIA flaps a limp leg up, down—) Don't bend the knee—

SYLVIA (thoughtfully) Of course, for the children's sake, I think Mrs Haines ought to stay (Piously) I know I would (Her knees look bent, not to say broken)

INSTRUCTRESS (imploring) Don't crook it, please

SYLVIA And she ought not to have faced Mr Haines with the issue When a man's got himself in that deep he has to have time to taper it off—

INSTRUCTRESS (straightening out SYLVIA's offending member with considerable force) Thigh in, not out

SYLVIA (pained, but undaunted) But Mrs Haines never listens to any of her friends She is a very peculiar woman

INSTRUCTRESS She must be Now, please—up—down—up—down—

SYLVIA (redoubling her efforts, and her error.) Oh, I tell everybody whatever she wants to do is the right thing I've got to be loyal to Mrs Haines, you know Oh, I'm simply exhausted (Flops over, flat on her stomach, panting)

INSTRUCTRESS Then suppose you try something simple—like crawling up the wall? (SYLVIA lifts a martyred face The INSTRUCTRESS changes the record for a waltz)

SYLVIA (scrambling to her feet) What I go through to keep my figure! Lord, it infuriates me at dinner parties when some fat lazy man asks, "What do you do with yourself all day, Mrs Fowler?" (Sits alongside the rear wall)

INSTRUCTRESS You rotate on your buttocks (SYLVIA rotates, then lies back, her knees drawn up to her chin, the soles of her feet against the wall) Arms flat Now you crawl slowly up the wall

SYLVIA (crawling) I wish you wouldn't say that It makes me feel like vermin—

INSTRUCTRESS (kneeling beside her) Don't talk

SYLVIA There's a couple of people I'd like to exterminate, too—

INSTRUCTRESS Let's reverse the action (SYLVIA crawls down, as PEGGY enters in an exercise suit The INSTRUCTRESS brightens)

INSTRUCTRESS How do you do, Mrs Day? (To SYLVIA) Down slowly—

PEGGY (gaily) How do you do? Hello, Sylvia

SYLVIA You're late again, Peggy

PEGGY (crestfallen) I'm sorry

SYLVIA (sitting up) After all, dear, I am paying for this course

PEGGY You know I'm grateful, Sylvia—

SYLVIA Well, don't cry about it It's only fifty dollars

PEGGY That's a lot to me—

SYLVIA (*sweetly*) To you, or just to your husband, dear?

INSTRUCTRESS Please, ladies Let us begin with posture (*SYLVIA rises*) A lady always enters a room erect

SYLVIA Lots of my friends exit horizontally (*PEGGY and SYLVIA go to the mirrored wall, stand with their backs to it*)

INSTRUCTRESS Now—knees apart Sit on the wall (*They sit on imaginary seats*) Relax (*They bend forward from the waist, finger-tips brushing the floor*) Now, roll slowly up the wall pressing each little vertebra against the wall as hard as you can shoulders back, and where they belong Heads back Mrs Fowler, lift yourself behind the ears Pretend you're just a silly little puppet dangling on a string Chin up (*She places her hand at the level of PEGGY's straining chin*) No, Mrs Day, your chin is resting comfortably on a little table Elbows bent—up on your toes—arms out—shove with the small of your back—you're off! (*SYLVIA and PEGGY, side by side, mince across the room*)

PEGGY (*whispering*) Oh, Sylvia, why do you always insinuate that John is practically a—miser?

INSTRUCTRESS (*she refers to PEGGY's swaying hips*) Tuck under!

SYLVIA You have your own little income, Peggy And what do you do with it? You give it to John—

INSTRUCTRESS Now, back, please! (*They mince backwards across the room*)

PEGGY (*staunchly*). John makes so little—

INSTRUCTRESS (*she refers to SYLVIA's relaxed tummy*) Steady center control!

SYLVIA Peggy, you're robbing John of his manly sense of responsibility You're turning him into a gigolo A little money of her own she lets no man touch is the only protection a woman has (*They are against the mirror again*)

INSTRUCTRESS Now, are you both the way you were when you left the wall?

SYLVIA (*brightly*) Well, I am

INSTRUCTRESS No, Mrs Fowler, you're not (*She imitates SYLVIA's posture, showing how SYLVIA's posterior protrudes, against the dictates of fashion, if not of nature*) Not this, Mrs Fowler—("Bumps") That! (*She leads SYLVIA forward*) Try it, please (*Facing one another, they do an elegant pair of "bumps"*) Now, relax on the mat (*This piece of business defies description, but to do the best one can the GIRLS stand side by side, arms straight above their heads At the INSTRUCTRESS' count of "one," each drops a hand, limp, from the wrist At "two," the other hand drops, then their heads fall upon their breasts, their arms flap to their sides, their waists eave in, their knees buckle under, and they swoon, or crumble like boneless things, to the mat*)

INSTRUCTRESS (*she has changed the record*) Now, ready? Bend—stretch, you know Begin—(*They do another leg exercise on the mat*) Bend—

stretch—bend—down—plenty of pull on the hamstrings, please! Bend—stretch—bend—down—

(Enter EDITH She is draped in a white sheet Her head is bound in a white towel Her face is undergoing a "tie-up," that is, she wears broad white straps under her chin and across her forehead She appears very distressed)

EDITH Oh, Sylvia! Hello, Peggy—

SYLVIA (sitting up) Why, Edith, what are you doing up here?

EDITH Having a facial, downstairs Oh, Sylvia I'm so glad you're here I've done the most awful thing, I—

INSTRUCTRESS We're right in the middle of our exercises, Mrs Potter—

SYLVIA (to INSTRUCTRESS) Will you tell them outside—I want my paraffine bath now? There's a dear

INSTRUCTRESS But, Mrs Fowler—

SYLVIA (cajoling) I'm simply exhausted

INSTRUCTRESS You've hardly moved a muscle

SYLVIA (with elaborate patience) Look, whose carcass is this? Yours or mine?

INSTRUCTRESS It's yours, Mrs Fowler, but I'm paid to exercise it

SYLVIA You talk like a 'horse-trainer

INSTRUCTRESS Well, Mrs Fowler, you're getting warm (Exits)

EDITH I've done the most ghastly thing Move over (PEGGY and SYLVIA move over, EDITH plumps between them on the mat) But it wasn't until I got here, in the middle of my facial, that I realized it—I could bite my tongue off when I think of it—

SYLVIA Well, what is it, Edith?

EDITH I was lunching with Frances Jones, and—

SYLVIA Edith Potter, I know exactly what you're going to say!

EDITH I forgot she—

SYLVIA You forgot she's Dolly de Peyster

EDITH But I never read her awful column—

SYLVIA (fiercely) You told her something about me? What did you tell her?

EDITH Oh, darling, you know I never give you away (Remorsefully) I—I—told her all about Stephen and Mary—

SYLVIA (relieved) Oh! That!

EDITH It wasn't until the middle of my facial—

PEGGY Oh, Edith! It will be in all those dreadful tabloids!

EDITH I know—I've been racking my brains to recall what I said—I think I told her that when Mary walked into the fitting room, she yanked the ermine coat off the Allen girl—

SYLVIA You didn't!

EDITH Well, I don't know whether I said *ermine* or *sable*—but I know I told her that Mary *smacked* the Allen girl!

PEGGY Edith!

EDITH Well, that's what Sylvia told me!

SYLVIA I didn't!

EDITH You did, too!

SYLVIA (*hurt*) Anyway, I didn't expect you to tell it to a cheap reporter—

EDITH Well, it doesn't really make much difference. The divorce is practically settled—

SYLVIA (*eagerly*) Who says so?

EDITH You did!

SYLVIA (*patiently*) I said, Mary couldn't broadcast her domestic difficulties, and not expect them to wind up in a scandal.

PEGGY Mary didn't broadcast them!

SYLVIA Who did?

PEGGY You did. You—you're all making it impossible for her to do anything now but get a divorce!

SYLVIA You flatter us. We didn't realize how much influence we had on our friends' lives!

PEGGY Everybody calling her up, telling her how badly she's been treated—

SYLVIA As a matter of fact, I told her she'd make a great mistake. What

has any woman got to gain by a divorce? No matter how much he gives her, she won't have what they have together. And you know as well as I do, he'd marry that girl. What he's spent on her, he'd have to, to protect his investment. (*Sorrowfully*) But, I have as much influence on Mary as I have on you, Peggy. (*The INSTRUCTRESS re-enters*)

INSTRUCTRESS The paraffine bath is ready, Mrs. Fowler.

SYLVIA (*rises*) Well, don't worry, Edith, I'll give de Peyster a ring. I can fix it.

EDITH How?

SYLVIA (*graciously*) Oh, I'll tell her you were lying.

EDITH You'll do no such thing!

SYLVIA (*shrugging*) Then let the story ride. It will be forgotten tomorrow. You know the awful things they printed about—what's her name?—before she jumped out the window? Why, I can't even remember her name, so who cares, Edith? (*Exits*)

INSTRUCTRESS Mrs. Potter, you come right back where you belong.

EDITH Why, you'd think this was a boarding school!

INSTRUCTRESS But, Mrs. Potter, it's such a foolish waste of money—

EDITH Listen, relaxing is part of my facial.

INSTRUCTRESS (*coolly*) Then you should relax completely, Mrs. Potter, from the chin up. (*Exits*)

EDITH Honestly, the class feeling you run into these days! (*Struggles to her feet*) I'm so tired of paying creatures like that to insult me—

PEGGY (*going to her*) Edith! Let's call Mary up and warn her!

EDITH About what?

PEGGY The newspapers!

EDITH My dear, how could we do that, without involving Sylvia—

PEGGY But it's *her* fault— Oh, she's such a dreadful woman!

EDITH Oh, she can't help it, Peggy. It's just her tough luck she wasn't born deaf and dumb. But what can we do about it? She's always gotten away with murder. Why, she's been having an affair for a year with that young customers' man in Howard's office.

PEGGY (*shocked*) Edith!

EDITH Right under Howard's nose! But Howard doesn't care! So what business is it of yours or mine? (*Earnestly*) Peggy, take a tip from me—keep out of other women's troubles. I've never had a fight with a girl friend in all my life. Why? I hear no evil, I see no evil, I speak no evil!

CURTAIN

SCENE II

A few days later

MARY's pantry, midnight. Left, a swinging door, to the kitchen. Rear, a sink under a curtained window. A small, built-in refrigerator. Center, a table, two chairs.

As the curtain rises, JANE, the maid, and MAGGIE, the new cook, are having a midnight snack. MAGGIE, a buxom, middle-aged woman, wears a wrapper and felt bedroom slippers.

JANE (*folding a tabloid newspaper which she has been reading to MAGGIE*) So he says, "All you can do with a story like that, is live it down, Mary."

MAGGIE I told you they'd begin all over. Once a thing like that is out between a married couple, they've got to fight it out. Depends which they get sick of first, each other, or the argument.

JANE It's enough to make you lose your faith in marriage.

MAGGIE Whose faith in marriage?

JANE You don't believe in marriage?

MAGGIE Sure I do. For women (*Sighs*) But it's the sons of Adam they got to marry. Go on.

JANE Well, finally he said to the madam, "I gave her up, didn't I? And

I was a swine, about the way I did it " How do you suppose he did it, Maggie?

MAGGIE Maybe he just said, "Scram, the wife is onto us "

JANE Well, the madam didn't believe him She says, "Stephen, you really ain't seen her?"

MAGGIE He hed in his teeth—

JANE Oh, the way he said it, I kind of believed him But the madam says, "Oh, but can I ever trust you again?"

MAGGIE You can't trust none of 'em no further than I can luck this lemon pie

JANE Oh, it was terrible sad He said, "Mary, dear Mary, Mary, dear Mary, Mary—"

MAGGIE Dear Mary But it ain't exactly convincing

JANE Then, I guess he tried to kiss her Because she says, "Please don't I'll never be able to kiss you again, without thinking of her in your arms "

MAGGIE (*appreciatively*) Just like 'n the movies— Imagine him taking up with a girl like that

JANE He was telling the madam She's a virgin

MAGGIE She is? Then what's all the rumpus about?

JANE Oh, she ain't a virgin now She was

MAGGIE So was Mae West—once

JANE He told the madam he'd been faithful for twelve years

MAGGIE Well, that's something these days, that beats flying the Atlantic. Did the madam believe him?

JANE She said, "How do I know you've been faithful?"

MAGGIE She don't

JANE But the way he said it—

MAGGIE Listen, if they lay off six months, they feel themselves busting out all over with haloes

JANE Anyway, he says this girl was really a nice girl So sweet and interested in him and all And how it happened one night, unexpected, in her room—

MAGGIE Did he think it was going to happen in Roxy's?

JANE He said she wouldn't take nothing from him for months—

MAGGIE Only her education Oh, that one knew her onions She certainly played him for a sucker

JANE That's what the madam said She said, "Stephen, can't you see that girl's only interested in you for your money?"

MAGGIE Tch, tch, tch I'll bet that made him sore A man don't like to be told no woman but his wife is fool enough to love him It drives 'em nutty

JANE Did it! "Mary, I told you what kind of girl she is," he says You know—I just told you—

MAGGIE I had her number You didn't convey no information

JANE Well, ther' they both get sore

MAGGIE (*rises, goes out for coffee*) I knew it

JANE So, he began to tell her all over, what a good husband he'd been And how hard he'd worked for her and the kids And she kept interrupting with what a good wife she'd been and how proud she was of him 'Then they began to exaggerate themselves—

MAGGIE (*enters with coffee pot*) Listen, anybody that's ever been married knows that line backwards and forwards What happened?

JANE Well, somewhere in there the madam says, "Stephen, you do want a divorce Only you ain't got the courage to ask it" And he says, "Oh, my God, no I don't, Mary Haven't I told you?" And she says, "But you don't love me!" And he says, "But oh, my God, Mary, I'm awful fond of you" And she says, very icy, "Fond, fond? Is that all?" And he says, "No, Mary, there's the children" Maggie, that's the thing I don't understand Why does she get so mad every time he says they've got to consider the children? If children ain't the point of being married, what is?

MAGGIE A woman don't want to be told she's being kept on just to run a kindergarten (*Goes to the icebox for a bottle of cream*)

JANE Well, the madam says, "Stephen, I want to keep the children out of this I haven't used the chil-

dren I ain't asked you to sacrifice yourself for the children" Maggie, that's where he got so terrible mad He says, "But why, in God's name, Mary? You knew about us all along Why did you wait until now to make a fool of me?"

MAGGIE As if he needed her help

JANE So then, suddenly she says, in a awful low voice, "Stephen, oh, Stephen, we can't go on like this It ain't worthy of what we been to each other!" And he says, "Oh, no, it's not, Mary!"

MAGGIE Quite a actress, ain't you?

JANE My boy friend says I got eyes like Claudette Colbert's

MAGGIE Did he ever say anything about your legs? Have a cup of coffee (*Pours coffee*)

JANE That's when the madam says what you could have knocked me down with a feather! The madam says, "Stephen, I want a divorce Yes, Stephen, I want a divorce!"

MAGGIE Tch Tch Abdicating!

JANE Well, Maggie, you could have knocked him down with a feather!

MAGGIE (*waving coffee pot*) I'd like to knock him down with this

JANE "My God! Mary," he says, "you don't mean it!" So she says, in a funny voice, "Yes, I do You've killed my love for you, Stephen"

MAGGIE He's just simple minded enough to believe that

JANE So he says, "I don't blame you My God, how can I blame you?"

MAGGIE My God, he can't!

JANE So then she said it was all over, because it was only the children he minded losing She said that made their marriage a mockery

MAGGIE A mockery?

JANE Something funny

MAGGIE I ain't going to die laughing

JANE He said she was talking nonsense He said she was just upset on account of this story in the papers He said what else could she expect if she was going to spill her troubles to a lot of gabby women? He said she should go to bed until she could think things over He was going out for a breath of fresh air

MAGGIE The old hat trick

JANE So the madam says, "You're going to see that girl" And he says, "Oh, for God's sake, Mary, one minute you never want to see me again, the next I can't even go out for a airing!"

MAGGIE You oughtn't to let none of 'em out except on a leash

JANE And she says, "Are you going to see her, or ain't you?" And he says, "Well, what difference does it make, if you're going to divorce me?" And she says, "It don't make no difference to you, I guess Please go, Stephen And don't come back ever" (*Begins to cry*)

MAGGIE (*impatiently*) Yeah

JANE I didn't hear his last words Because naturally, when he said he was going, I scooted down the hall But I heard her call, "Stephen?" And he stops on the landing and says, "Yes, Mary?" and she says, "Nothing Just don't slam the front door—The servants will hear you!" So I came down here Oh, Maggie, what's going to happen?

MAGGIE She's going to get a divorce

JANE Oh, dear I'm so sad for her

MAGGIE I ain't

JANE What?

MAGGIE She's indulging a pride she ain't entitled to Marriage is a business of taking care of a man and rearing his children It ain't meant to be no perpetual honeymoon How long would any husband last if he was supposed to go on acting forever like a red-hot Clark Gable? What's the difference if he don't love her?

JANE How can you say that, Maggie?

MAGGIE That don't let her off her obligation to keep him from making a fool of himself, does it?

JANE Do you think he'll marry that girl?

MAGGIE When a man's got the habit of supporting some woman, he just don't feel natural unless he's doing it

JANE But he told the madam marrying her was the furthest thing from his mind

MAGGIE It don't matter what he's got in his mind It's what those two women got in theirs will settle the matter

JANE But the madam says it's up to *him* She said, "You love her, or you love me, Stephen"

MAGGIE So what did he say to that?

JANE Nothing for a long time Just walked up and down—up and down—up and—

MAGGIE He was thinking Tch—tch The first man who can think up a good explanation how he can be in love with his wife *and* another woman, is going to win that prize they're always giving out in Sweden!

CURTAIN

SCENE III

A month later

MARY's living room *The room is now denuded of pictures, books, vases, etc The rug is rolled up The curtains and chairs are covered with slips*

As the curtain rises, MARY, dressed for traveling, is pacing up and down MRS MOREHEAD, dressed for the street, watches her from the sofa

MRS MOREHEAD What time does your train go?

MARY (*looking at her wrist watch*) An hour His secretary ought to be here I never knew there could be so many papers to sign

MRS MOREHEAD You showed everything to your lawyers—

MARY They always say the same thing! I'm getting a "raw deal"—

MRS MOREHEAD (*alarmed*) But, Mary—

MARY Oh, I know it's not true Stephen's been very generous

MRS MOREHEAD Oh, I wouldn't say that If Stephen is a rich man now, he owes it largely to you

MARY Stephen would have gotten where he is, with or without me

MRS MOREHEAD He didn't have a penny when you married him

MARY Mother, are you trying to make me bitter, too?

MRS MOREHEAD (*helplessly*) I'm sure I don't know what to say If I sympathize with Stephen, you accuse me of taking his side And when I sympathize with you, I'm making you bitter The thing for me to do is keep still (*There is a pause Then, emphatically*) You're both making a terrible mistake!

MARY Mother, please!

MRS MOREHEAD But the children, Mary The children—

MARY What good will it do them to be brought up in a home full of quarreling and suspicion? They'll be better off just with me

MRS MOREHEAD No, they won't A child needs both its parents in one home

MARY A home without love?

MRS MOREHEAD He's terribly fond of you—

MARY Mother, don't use that word! Oh, Mother, please Every argument goes round in circles And, it's too late now—

MRS MOREHEAD It's never too late when you love Mary, why don't you call this thing off? I'm sure that's what Stephen's waiting for

MARY (*bitterly*) Is it? He hasn't made any sign of it to me Isn't he the one to come to me?

MRS MOREHEAD You're the one, Mary, who insisted on the divorce

MARY But don't you see, if he hadn't wanted it, he'd have fought me—

MRS MOREHEAD Stephen's not the fighting kind

MARY Neither am I

MRS MOREHEAD Damn these modern laws!

MARY Mother!

MRS MOREHEAD Damn them, I say! Fifty years ago, when women couldn't get divorces, they made the best of situations like this And some-

times, out of situations like this they made very good things indeed! (*Enter JANE, right*)

JANE Mr Haines' secretary, ma'am.

MRS MOREHEAD Tell her to come in (*Exit JANE*) Now, go bathe your eyes Don't let that adding machine see you like this And don't be long Remember, you have one more unpleasant task

MARY Mary?

MRS MOREHEAD The child must be told

MARY (*miserably, and a little guiltily*) I have been putting it off Because—

MRS MOREHEAD Because you hope at the last minute a miracle will keep you from making a mess of your life Have you thought Stephen might marry that girl?

MARY (*very confident*) He won't do that

MRS MOREHEAD What makes you so sure?

MARY Because, deep down, Stephen does love me— But he won't find it out, until I've—really gone away— (*At the door*) You'll take good care of the children, Mother? And make them write to me to Reno, once a week? And please, Mother, don't spoil them so (*Exits left*)

MRS MOREHEAD Gracious! You'd think I'd never raised children of my own! (*Enter MISS WATTS and MISS TRIMMERBACK, right*) They are very tailored, plain girls MISS WATTS, the older and the plainer of the two

carries a brief case) How do you do, Miss Watts?

MISS WATTS How do you do, Mrs Morehead? This is Miss Trimmerback from our office

MISS TRIMMERBACK How do you do?

MISS WATTS She's a notary We have some papers for Mrs Haines to sign

MRS MOREHEAD Anything I can do?

MISS WATTS The children will be with you? *(MRS MOREHEAD nods)* Any incidental bills, Mrs Morehead, send to the office But you understand, bills arriving after the divorce will be assumed by Mrs Haines under the terms of the settlement

MRS MOREHEAD Mrs Haines will be with you in a minute Please don't bother her with unnecessary details She's—she's pressed for time *(Exits right)*

MISS TRIMMERBACK Gee, don't you feel sorry for Mrs Haines?

MISS WATTS *(bitterly)* I don't feel sorry for any woman who thinks the world owes her breakfast in bed

MISS TRIMMERBACK You don't like her

MISS WATTS Oh, she never interfered at the office

MISS TRIMMERBACK Maybe that's why he's been a success

MISS WATTS He'd have gotten further without her Everything big that came up, he was too cautious, because of her and the kids *(Opens the brief case, takes out papers and*

pen, arranges the papers, for signing, on the table) Well, thank heavens it's almost over He and I can go back to work *(Sits)*

MISS TRIMMERBACK What about Allen?

MISS WATTS *(guardedly)* What about her?

MISS TRIMMERBACK Is he going to marry her?

MISS WATTS I don't butt into his private affairs Oh, I hold no brief for Allen But I must say knowing *her* gave him a new interest in his work Before her, he was certainly going stale That had me worried

MISS TRIMMERBACK *(sinking on the sofa)* Well, she's lucky, I'll say

MISS WATTS Oh?

MISS TRIMMERBACK I wish I could get a man to foot my bills I'm sick and tired, cooking my own breakfast, sloshing through the rain at 8 A M, working like a dog For what? Independence? A lot of independence you have on a woman's wages I'd chuck it like that for a decent, or an indecent, home

MISS WATTS I'm sure you would

MISS TRIMMERBACK Wouldn't you?

MISS WATTS I have a home

MISS TRIMMERBACK You mean Plattsburgh, where you were born?

MISS WATTS The office That's my home

MISS TRIMMERBACK Some home! I see The office-wife?

MISS WATTS (*defiantly*) He could get along better without Mrs Haines or Allen than he could without me

MISS TRIMMERBACK Oh, you're very efficient, dear But what makes you think you're indispensable?

MISS WATTS I relieve him of a thousand foolish details I remind him of things he forgets, including, very often these days, his good opinion of himself I never cry and I don't nag I guess I am the office-wife And a lot better off than Mrs Haines He'll never divorce me!

MISS TRIMMERBACK (*astonished*) Why, you're in love with him! (*They both rise, face each other angrily*)

MISS WATTS What if I am? I'd rather work for him than marry the kind of a dumb cluck I could get— (*Almost tearful*) just because he's a man— (*Enter MARY, left*)

MARY Yes, Miss Watts

MISS WATTS (*collecting herself quickly*) Here are the inventories of the furniture, Mrs Haines I had the golf cups, the books, etchings, and the ash stands sent to Mr Haines' club (*Pauses*) Mr Haines asked if he could also have the portrait of the two children

MARY (*looking at the blank space over the mantel*) Oh, but—

MISS WATTS He said it wouldn't matter, if you really didn't care for him to have it

MARY It's in storage

MISS WATTS (*laying a paper on the table*) This will get it out Sign there The cook's letter of reference Sign here (*MARY sits, signs*) The insurance papers You sign here (*MISS TRIMMERBACK signs each paper after MARY*) The transfer papers on the car What do you want done with it?

MARY Well, I—

MISS WATTS I'll find a garage Sign here What do you want done if someone meets your price on this apartment?

MARY Well, I thought—

MISS WATTS This gives us power of attorney until you get back Sign here

MARY But—I—

MISS WATTS Oh, it's quite in order, Mrs Haines Now, Mr Haines took the liberty of drawing you a new will. (*Places a blue, legal-looking document before MARY*)

MARY (*indignantly*) But—really—

MISS WATTS If anything were to happen to you in Reno, half your property would revert to him A detail your lawyers overlooked Mr Haines drew up a codicil cutting himself out—

MARY But, I don't understand legal language, Miss Watts I—I must have my lawyer—

MISS WATTS As you please (*Stiffly*) Mr Haines suggested this for your sake, not his I'm sure you realize, he has nothing but your interests at heart (*A pause*) Sign here (*MARY*

signs, MISS WATTS signs) We need three witnesses (Enter JANE, right, with a box of flowers) Your maid will do

MARY- Jane, please witness this It's my will

JANE (in tears) Oh, Mrs Haines! (Signs)

MISS WATTS (gathering all the papers) You can always make changes, in the event of your remarriage (MARY rises) And don't hesitate to let me know at the office, if there is anything I can ever do for you

MARY (coldly) There will be nothing, Miss Watts

MISS WATTS (cheerfully) Oh, there are always tag ends to a divorce, Mrs Haines And you know how Mr Haines hates to be bothered with inconsequential details Good day, Mrs Haines, and pleasant journey to you! (Exit MISS WATTS right, followed by MISS TRIMMERBACK)

JANE (sniveling as she places the box on the table) Mr Haines said I was to give you these to wear on the train (Exits abruptly MARY slowly opens the box, takes out a corsage of orchids and a card Reads aloud "What can I say? Stephen" Then throws them violently in the corner Enter MRS MOREHEAD, LITTLE MARY, dressed for street)

MRS MOREHEAD All set, dear?

MARY (grimly) All set— Mary, Mother wants to talk to you before she goes away.

MRS MOREHEAD Brother and I will wait for you downstairs (Exit MRS MOREHEAD)

MARY Mary, sit down, dear (LITTLE MARY skips to the sofa, sits down A pause MARY discovers that it's going to be even more painful and difficult than she imagined) Mary—

LITTLE MARY Yes, Mother?

MARY Mary—

LITTLE MARY (perplexed by her mother's tone, which she feels bodes no good to her) Have I done something wrong, Mother?

MARY Oh, no, darling, no (She sits beside her daughter, and takes her two hands) Mary, you know Daddy's been gone for some time

LITTLE MARY (sadly) A whole month

MARY Shall I tell you why?

LITTLE MARY (eagerly) Why?

MARY (plunging in) You know, darling, when a man and woman fall in love what they do, don't you?

LITTLE MARY They kiss a lot—

MARY They get married—

LITTLE MARY Oh, yes And then they have those children

MARY Well, sometimes, married people don't stay in love

LITTLE MARY What, Mother?

MARY The husband and the wife— fall out of love

LITTLE MARY Why do they do that?

LITTLE MARY. Oh, Mother why?

MARY. Well, they do, that's all And when they do, they get unmarried You see?

MARY I—I don't know—But it isn't either Daddy's or Mother's fault

LITTLE MARY No

LITTLE MARY But, Mother, when you love somebody I thought you loved them until the day you die!

MARY Well, they do They—they get what is called a divorce

MARY With children, yes But grown-ups are different They can fall out of love

LITTLE MARY (*very matter-of-fact*) Oh, do they?

MARY You don't know what a divorce is, but—

LITTLE MARY I won't fall out of love with you and Daddy when I grow up Will you fall out of love with me?

LITTLE MARY Yes, I do I go to the movies, don't I? And lots of my friends have mummies and daddies who are divorced

MARY Oh, no, darling, that's different, too

MARY (*relieved, kisses her*) You know I love you very much, don't you, Mary?

LITTLE MARY (*miserable*) I don't see how

LITTLE MARY (*a pause*) Of course Mother

MARY You'll have to take my word for it, baby, it is This divorce has nothing to do with our love for you

MARY Your father and I are going to get a divorce That's why I'm going away That's why— Oh, darling, I can't explain to you quite But I promise you, when you are older you will understand And you'll forgive me You really will! Look at me, baby, please!

LITTLE MARY But if you and Daddy—

MARY (*rising and drawing her daughter up to her*) Darling, I'll explain it better to you in the taxi We'll go alone in the taxi, shall we?

LITTLE MARY (*her lips begin to tremble*) I'm looking at you, Mother— Doesn't Daddy love you any more?

LITTLE MARY But, Mother, if you and Daddy are getting a divorce, which one won't I see again? Daddy or you?

MARY No, he doesn't

LITTLE MARY Don't you love him?

MARY You and Brother will live with me That's what happens when—when people get divorced Children must go with their mothers But you'll see Daddy—sometimes Now, darling, come along

MARY I—I—no, Mary

LITTLE MARY Please, Mother, wait for me downstairs

MARY Why?

LITTLE MARY I have to go to the bathroom

MARY Then hurry along, dear—
(Sees the orchids on the floor, and as she moves to the door stoops, picks

them up, goes out LITTLE MARY stands looking after her, stricken. Suddenly she goes to the back of the chair, hugs it, as if for comfort Then she begins to cry and beat the back of the chair with her fists)

LITTLE MARY Oh, please, please, Mother dear— Oh! Daddy, Daddy darling! Oh, why don't you do something—do something—Mother dear!

CURTAIN

SCENE IV

A month later

A room in a lying-in hospital Left, a door to the corridor Right, a window banked to the sill with expensive flowers Center, a hospital bed, in which EDITH, propped up in a sea of lace pillows, lies with a small bundle at her breast A white-uniformed nurse sits by the window The droop of her shoulders is eloquent EDITH is a trying patient As the curtain rises, EDITH reaches across the bundle to the bedside table for a cigarette She can't make it

EDITH (whining) Nurse!

NURSE (rising wearily) Yes, Mrs Potter

EDITH Throw me a cigarette

NURSE Can't you wait, at least until you're through nursing?

EDITH How many children have you nursed? I've nursed four (NURSE lights her cigarette, EDITH shifts the bundle slightly) Ouch! Damn it! It's got jaws like a dinosaur
(Enter PEGGY with a box of flowers)

PEGGY Hello Edith

EDITH (in a faint voice) Hello, Peggy

PEGGY (putting flowers on bed) Here—

EDITH How thoughtful! Nurse, will you ask this damn hospital if they're equipped with a decent vase?
(NURSE takes the box, opens flowers and arranges them, with others, in the window)

PEGGY (leans over baby) Oh, let me see Oh, Edith, isn't he divine!

EDITH I hate that milky smell

PEGGY (*alarmed*) What's that on his nose?

EDITH What nose? Oh, that's an ash
(*Blows away the ash* Hands PEGGY a letter from beside table)

PEGGY. Mary?

EDITH (*nodding*) All about how healthy Reno is Not a word about how she feels I thought she cared more about Stephen than that She sends her love to you and John (PEGGY reads *The wail of a new-born is heard outside*)

EDITH Nurse, close that door (*The NURSE closes the door*) I can't tell you what that new-born yodel does to my nerves (*To PEGGY*) What're you so down in the mouth about? I feel as badly about it as you do, but it was the thing Mary wanted to do, or she wouldn't have done it Judging by that, she's reconciled to the whole idea

PEGGY She's just being brave!

EDITH Brave? Why should she bother to be brave with her friends? Here, Nurse, he's through (*The NURSE takes the bundle from her*) I told Phelps to be sure to tell Stephen that Mary's perfectly happy It will cheer Stephen up He's been going around like a whipped dog

PEGGY Oh, Edith, please let me hold him! (*The NURSE gives PEGGY the baby*)

NURSE (*smiling*) Careful of his back Mrs Day

PEGGY (*goes to the window, hugging the bundle*) Oh, I like the feeling so!

EDITH You wouldn't like it so much if you'd just had it (*Whispering*) I had a terrible time, didn't I, Nurse?

NURSE Oh, no, Mrs Potter You had a very easy time (*She is suddenly angry*) Why, women like you don't know what a terrible time is. Try bearing a baby and scrubbing floors. Try having one in a cold filthy kitchen, without ether, without a change of linen, without decent food, without a cent to bring it up—and try getting up the next day with your insides falling out, to cook your husband's—! (*Controls herself*) No Mrs. Potter, you didn't have a terrible time at all—I'll take the baby, please (*Sees the reluctant expression on PEGGY's face*) I hope some day you'll have one of your own, Mrs Day (*The NURSE exits with the baby* PEGGY breaks into tears)

EDITH Well, for God's sake, Peggy, that old battle-axe didn't hurt my feelings a bit! They're all the same. If you don't get pentionitis or have quim tuplets, they think you've had a picnic— (PEGGY sits beside the bed, crying) What's the matter?

PEGGY Oh, Edith—John and I are getting a divorce!

EDITH (*patting her hand*) Well, darling, that's what I heard!

PEGGY (*surprised*) But—but we didn't decide to until last night

EDITH (*cheerfully*) Oh, darling, everybody could see it was in the cards Money, I suppose?

PEGGY (*nodding*) Oh, dear! I wish Mary were here—

EDITH Well, she'll be there,
(Laughs) Oh, forgive me, dear I do
feel sorry for you But it is funny

PEGGY What's funny?

EDITH It's going to be quite a gathering
of the clan (Sitting up in bed,
full of energy to break the news)
Howard Fowler's bounced Sylvia out
right on her ear! He's threatened to
divorce her right here in New York
if she doesn't go to Reno And name
her young customers' man—

PEGGY But—Howard's always
known—

EDITH Certainly He hired him, so
he'd have plenty of time for his own
affairs Howard's got some girl he
wants to marry But nobody, not even
Winchell, knows who she is!
Howard's a coony cuss (Laughing)
I do think it's screaming When you
remember how Sylvia always thought
she was putting something over on us
girls! (She laughs so hard, she gives
herself a stitch She falls back among
her pillows, limp and martyred)

PEGGY (bitterly) Life's awfully un-
attractive, isn't it?

EDITH (yawning) Oh, I wouldn't
complain if that damned stork would
take the Indian sign off me

CURTAIN

SCENE V

*A few weeks later MARY's living room in a Reno hotel In the rear wall,
a bay window showing a view of Reno's squat rooftops and distant Nevada
ranges Left, doors to the kitchenette, the bedroom Right, a door to the
corridor A plush armchair, a sofa In the corner, MARY's half-packed trunks
and bags It is all very drab and ugly As the curtain rises, LUCY, a slatternly,
middle-aged, husky woman in a house-dress, is packing the clothes that are
strewn on the armchair and the table She is singing in a nasal falsetto*

LUCY

Down on ole Smokey, all covered
with snow,
I lost my true lov-ver, from courtin'
too slow
Courtin' is pul-leasure, partin' is grief,
Anna false-hearted lov-ver is worse
thanna thief —

(PEGGY enters, right She wears a
polo coat and a wool tam She is on
the verge of tears.)

PEGGY Lucy, where's Mrs Haines?

LUCY Down waiting for the mail
You'll miss her a lot when she goes
tomorrow? (PEGGY nods, sinks, de-
jected, on the sofa) Mrs Haines is
about the nicest ever came here

PEGGY I hate Reno

LUCY You didn't come for fun (Goes
on with her packing and singing.)

THE grave'll de-cay you, an' change
you tuh dust,
Ain't one boy outta twenty, a poor gal
kun trust—

PEGGY You've seen lots of divorcees,
haven't you, Lucy?

LUCY Been cookin' for 'em for ten
years

PEGGY You feel sorry for us?

LUCY Well, ma'am, I don't You feel
plenty sorry enough for yourselves
(*Kindly*) Lord, you ain't got much
else to do

PEGGY (*resentfully*) You've never
been married, Lucy

LUCY (*indignant*) I've had three—

PEGGY Husbands?

LUCY Kids!

PEGGY Oh, then you're probably very
happy—

LUCY Lord, ma'am, I stopped think-
ing about being happy years ago

PEGGY You don't think about being
happy?

LUCY Ain't had the time With the
kids and all And the old man such a
demon when he's drinking— Them
big, strong, red-headed men They're
fiere

PEGGY Oh, Lucy, he beats you? How
terrible!

LUCY Ain't it? When you think what
a lot of women in this hotel need a
beating worse than me.

PEGGY But you live in Reno. You
could get a divorce overnight

LUCY Lord, a woman can't get her-
self worked up to a thing like that
overnight I had a mind to do it once
I had the money, too But I had to
call it off

PEGGY Why?

LUCY I found out I was in a family
way (*There is a rap on the door*)

PEGGY (*going to her*) Lucy, tell Mrs
Haines I must talk to her—alone— be-
fore supper—

(*Enter COUNTESS DE LAGE, left She
is a silly, amiable, middle-aged woman
with carefully waved, bleached hair.
She wears a gaudily-checked riding
habit, carries an enormous new som-
brero and a jug of corn liquor*)

COUNTESS Ah, Peggy, how are you,
dear child?

PEGGY All right, Countess de Lage

COUNTESS I've been galloping madly
over the desert all day Lucy, here's a
wee juggie We must celebrate Mrs
Haines' divorce

PEGGY Oh, Countess de Lage, I don't
think a divorce is anything to cele-
brate

COUNTESS Wait till you've lost a
many husbands as I have, Peggy
(*Wistfully*) Married, divorced, mar-
ried, divorced! But where Love leads I
always follow So here I am, in Reno

PEGGY Oh, I wish I were anywhere
else on earth

COUNTESS My dear, you've got the Reno jumpy-wumpies Did you go to the doctor? What did he say?

PEGGY He said it was—the altitude

COUNTESS Well, la, la, you'll get used to that My third husband was a Swiss If one lives in Switzerland, Peggy, one has simply got to accept the Alps As I used to say to myself, Flora, there those damn Alps are, and there's very little even you can do about it

PEGGY Yes, Countess de Lage
(Exits, hurriedly, left)

COUNTESS Oh, I wish she hadn't brought up the Alps, Lucy It always reminds me of that nasty moment I had the day Gustav made me climb to the top of one of them (Sits in arm-chair) Lucy, pull off my boots (Lucy kneels, tugs at her boots) Anyhow, there we were And suddenly it struck me that Gustav had pushed me (Tragically) I slid halfway down the mountain before I realized that Gustav didn't love me any more (Gaily) But Love takes care of its own, Lucy I slid right into the arms of my fourth husband, the Count

LUCY (rises, with boots) Ain't that the one you're divorcing now?

COUNTESS But, of course, Lucy (Plaintively) What could I do when I found out he was putting arsenic in my headache powders Ah! L'amour! L'amour! Lucy, were you ever in love?

LUCY Yes, ma'am

COUNTESS Tell me about it, Lucy

LUCY Well, ma'am, ain't much to tell I was kinda enjoyin' the courtin' time. It was as purty a sight as you ever saw, to see him come lopin' across them hills The sky so big and blue and that hair of his, blazing like the be-jesus in the sun Then we'd sit on my back fence and spark But, ma'am, you know how them big, strong, red-headed men are They just got to get to the point So we got married, ma'am And natcherally, I ain't had no chanct to think about love since—

COUNTESS (she has not been listening) The trouble with me, Lucy, is I've been marrying too many foreigners I think I'll go back to marrying Americans

(Enter MIRIAM, right She is a breezy, flashy redhead, about 28 years old She is wearing a theatrical pair of lounging pajamas)

MIRIAM Hya, Lucy?

LUCY Evening, Mrs Aarons (Exits, right)

MIRIAM Hya, Countess, how's rhythm on the range? (Sees the jug on the table, pours the COUNTESS and herself drinks)

COUNTESS Gallop, gallop, gallop, madly over the sagebrush! But now, Miriam, I'm having an emotional relapse In two weeks I'll be free, free as a bird from that little French bastard But whither, oh, whither shall I fly?

MIRIAM To the arms of that cowboy up at the dude ranch?

COUNTESS (modestly) Miriam Aarons!

MIRIAM Why, he's nuts for you, Countess He likes you better than his horse, and it's such a damn big horse

COUNTESS (*rises, and pads in her stocking feet to the sofa*) Well, Buck Winston is nice So young So strong Have you noticed the play of his muscles? (*Reclining*) Musical Musical

MIRIAM He could crack a coconut with those knees If he could get them together Say, Countess, that guy hasn't been arousing your honorable intentions, has he?

COUNTESS Yes, Minam, but I'm different from the rest of you I've always put my faith in love Still, I've had four divorces Dare I risk a fifth?

MIRIAM What are you asking, Countess, or maybe I shouldn't ask?

COUNTESS I mean, Minam, I could never make a success of Buck at Newport

MIRIAM Even Mrs Astor would have to admit Buck's handsome If I had your dough, I'd take him to Hollywood first, then Newport

COUNTESS Hollywood? Why not? I might turn him into a picture star After all, my second husband was a gondolier, and a month after I married him, a Duchess eloped with him Ah! L'amour! (*Enter SYLVIA, right She is wearing a smart dinner dress Her trip to Reno has embittered her, but it has not subdued her*)

MIRIAM. Hya, Sylvia? Going to a ball?

SYLVIA (*pours a drink*). Doing the town with a boy friend

MIRIAM. Where'd you pick him up?

SYLVIA The Silver State Bar I'm not going to sit around, moping, like Mary

COUNTESS Poor Mary If her husband gave her the flimsiest excuse, she'd take him back

SYLVIA She has no pride I'd roast in hell before I'd take Howard Fowler back Kicking me out like that! After all I sacrificed!

MIRIAM Such as what?

SYLVIA I gave him my youth!

COUNTESS (*dreamily*) Hélas, what else can a woman do with her youth, but give it to a man?

MIRIAM Hélas, she can't preserve it in alcohol

COUNTESS (*practical*) But, Sylvia, how could your husband kick you out, if you were a femme fidèle?

SYLVIA Of course, I was a faithful wife (*MIRIAM snorts*) What are you laughing at?

MIRIAM Two kinds of women, Sylvia, owls and ostriches (*Raises her glass*) To the feathered sisterhood! To the girls who get paid and paid (*Parenthetically*) And you got paid plenty!

SYLVIA You bet I got plenty! The skunk!

COUNTESS. I never got a sou from any of my husbands, except my first hus-

band Mr Straus He said the most touching thing in his will I remember every word of it "To my beloved wife, Flora, I leave all my estate in trust to be administered by executors, because she is an A No 1 schlemiel" (*Touched anew*) Wasn't that sweet?

(*Enter MARY, right She is subdued She is carrying some letters*)

MIRIAM Hya, queen?

MARY Fine

MIRIAM Ya lie

COUNTESS Mary, I'm starved
(*LUCY enters, left, takes MARY's hat*)

MARY Supper's nearly ready As my last official act in Reno, I cooked the whole thing with my hands, didn't I, Lucy?

LUCY All but the steak and tomatoes and dessert, Mrs Haines (*Exits, left*)

MARY (*gives a letter to SYLVIA, glancing, as she does so, at the inscription*) For you, Sylvia From Edith?

SYLVIA You couldn't miss that infantile handwriting (*Pointedly*) You didn't hear from anyone?

MARY No

SYLVIA Well, darling, Stephen's hardly worth a broken heart

MARY The less you have to say about me and Stephen the better I like it!

SYLVIA I'm only trying to cheer you up That's more than you do for me

MARY I'm doing enough, just being pleasant to you

SYLVIA My, you have got the jitters, dear

MIRIAM Hey, Sylvia, we're all out here in the same boat Mary's laid off you Why don't you lay off her?

SYLVIA Oh, I'm just trying to make her see life isn't over just because Stephen let her down (*Opens her letter A batch of press clippings falls out The COUNTESS picks them up, reads them idly, as SYLVIA goes on with the letter*)

COUNTESS You see, Miriam? What else is there for a woman but l'amour?

MIRIAM There's a little corn whiskey left (*She pours another drink*)

COUNTESS Cynic, you don't believe in Cupid

MIRIAM That double-crossing little squirt! Give me Donald Duck (*To MARY*) Have a drink? (*MARY shakes her head*) Listen, Babe, why not—give out? You'd feel better—

MARY (*laughing*) Miriam, you're not very chatty about your own affairs

COUNTESS (*suddenly engrossed by the clippings from SYLVIA's letter*) Miriam, you sly puss, you never told us you even knew Sylvia's husband.

SYLVIA (*looking up from her letter*). What?

COUNTESS (*rises*) Sylvia, listen to this "Miriam Vanities Aarons is being Renovated Three guesses, Mrs. Fowler, for whose Ostermoor?" (*SYLVIA snatches the clippings from her*)

MIRIAM Why can't those lousy rags leave a successful divorce alone?

COUNTRESS (*reading another clipping*) "Prominent stockbroker and ex-chienne to marry"

SYLVIA (*to MIRIAM*) Why, you little hypocrite! (*During this, PEGGY has entered and goes back of the sofa. She listens but does not join the group*)

MARY (*going to her*) Now, Sylvia—

SYLVIA Did you know this?

MARY Oh, Sylvia, why do you care? You don't love Howard—

SYLVIA (*brushing her aside*) That has nothing to do with it (*To MIRIAM, fiercely*) How much did he settle on you?

MIRIAM I made Howard pay for what he wants, you made him pay for what he doesn't want

SYLVIA You want him for his money

MIRIAM So what do you want him for? I'll stay bought That's more than you did, Sylvia

SYLVIA Why, you dirty little trollop!

MIRIAM Don't start calling names, you Park Avenue push-over! (*SYLVIA gives MIRIAM a terrific smack. In the twinkling of an eye, they are pulling hair. MARY seizes SYLVIA's arm, SYLVIA breaks loose. The COUNTRESS tugs at MIRIAM's belt, as LUCY comes in, looks at the fight with a rather professional eye, and exits for the smelling salts*)

COUNTRESS. Tiens! Miriam Don't be vulgar (*Her interference enables SYLVIA to slap MIRIAM unimpeded*)

MIRIAM (*shoving the COUNTRESS on the sofa*) Out of the way, you fat old—! (*SYLVIA grabs MIRIAM's hair*) Ouch, let go! (*SYLVIA is about to use her nails. MARY takes a hand*)

MARY I won't have this, you hear! (*MARY's interference allows MIRIAM to give SYLVIA a terrific kick in the shins*)

SYLVIA (*routed, in sobs*) Oh, you hurt me, you bitch, you! (*As she turns away, MIRIAM gives her another well-placed kick, which straightens SYLVIA up*)

MIRIAM Take that! (*SYLVIA, shrieking with rage and humiliation, grabs MIRIAM again, sinks her white teeth into MIRIAM's arm. At this mayhem, MARY seizes her, shakes her violently, pushes her sobbing into the arm-chair*)

MARY (*to MIRIAM*) That's enough

MIRIAM Where's the iodine? (*MARY points to bedroom*) Gotta be careful of hydrophobia, you know (*Exits, right*)

SYLVIA (*blubbing, nursing her wounds*) Oh, Mary, how could you let her do that to me!

MARY (*coldly*) I'm terribly sorry, Sylvia

SYLVIA The humiliation! You're on her side After all I've done for you!

MARY What have you done for me?

SYLVIA I warned you!

MARY (*bitterly*). I'm not exactly grateful for that.

SYLVIA (*hysterical*) Oh, aren't you? Listen to me, you ball of conceit You're not the object of pity you suppose Plenty of the girls are tickled to death you got what was coming to you You deserved to lose Stephen, the stupid way you act But I always stood up for you, like a loyal friend What thanks do I get? You knew about that woman, and you stood by, gloating, while she—

MARY Get out of here! (*LUCY enters from the bedroom, with a bottle of spirits of ammonia, as SYLVIA gives way completely to hysteria, and, screaming with rage, picks up ash trays, glasses, and cigarette boxes, and hurls them violently against the wall*)

SYLVIA (*at the top of her lungs*) I hate you! I hate you! I hate everybody—

LUCY (*takes SYLVIA firmly by the shoulders, forces the bottle under her nose*) Listen, Mrs Fowler! You got the hy-strikes! (*Rushes her gasping, sobbing, to the door*)

SYLVIA You wait Some day you'll need a woman friend Then you'll think of me— (*Exit LUCY and SYLVIA, struggling helplessly, right*)

COUNTESS (*rising from the sofa*) Poor creatures They've lost their equilibrium because they've lost their faith in love (*Philosophically*) L'amour Remember the song Buck made up, just for me? (*Pours herself a drink, sings*) "Oh, a man can ride a horse to the range above, But a woman's got to ride on the wings of love, Coma a-ty-yippi" (*Throws*

the jug over her shoulder, and exits right, still singing, as MIRIAM enters, the ravages of her fight repaired)

MIRIAM The coast clear?

PEGGY Oh, that was the most disgusting thing I ever saw

MIRIAM Right, kid, we're a pair of alley cats—

MARY You should not be here, Peggy, to see it at all (*She picks up the ash trays, etc*)

MIRIAM What the hell are you doing here?

MARY Peggy wanted to buy a car

PEGGY With my own money!

MARY John said they couldn't afford a car

PEGGY He couldn't I could

MARY What was his—is yours What is yours—is your own Very fair

PEGGY A woman's best protection is a little money of her own

MARY A woman's best protection is—the right man (*With gentle sarcasm*) Obviously, John isn't the right man and Peggy will forget all about him in another month

PEGGY No, I won't I can't Because—because— (*Bursts into tears*) Oh, Mary, I'm going to have a baby Oh, Mary, what shall I do?

MARY Peggy, what's his telephone number?

PEGGY (*quickly*) Eldorado 5-2075 (*MIRIAM goes at once to the phone*

Gets the operator, gives the number)
But, oh, Mary, I can't tell him!

MIRIAM Why? Isn't it his?

PEGGY Oh, of course!

MIRIAM And make it snappy, operator.

PEGGY I always wanted it But what can I do with it now?

MIRIAM Land it with the Marines—

MARY Peggy, you've shared your love with him Your baby will share your blood, your eyes, your hair, your virtues—and your faults— But your little pin-money, that, of course, you could not share

PEGGY Oh, Mary, I know I'm wrong But, it's no use—you don't know the things he said to me I have my pride

MARY (*bitterly*) Reno's full of women who all have their pride

PEGGY You think I'm like them

MIRIAM You've got the makings, dear

MARY Love has pride in nothing—but its own humility

MIRIAM (*at telephone*) Mr Day, please Reno calling—Mr Day? My God, he must live by the phone Just hold the—
(PEGGY leaps to the phone)

PEGGY Hello, John (*Clears her throat of a sob*) No, I'm not sick! That is, I am sick! That is, I'm sick to my stomach Oh, John! I'm going to have a baby— Oh, darling, are you?— Oh, darling, do you?— Oh,

darling, so am I! So do I! Course, I forgive you— Yes, precious Yes, lamb On the very next train! John? (*A kiss into the phone It is returned*) Oh, Johnny, when I get back, things are going to be so different—! John, do you mind if I reverse the charges? (*Hangs up*) I can't stay for supper I've got to pack

MARY When you get back—don't see too much of the girls

PEGGY Oh, I won't, Mary It's all their fault we're here

MARY Not—entirely

PEGGY Good-bye! Oh, I'm so happy, I could cry (*Exits, right*)

MIRIAM Getting wise, aren't you?

MARY Know all the answers

MIRIAM Then, why're you here?

MARY I had plenty of advice, Miriam
(*The telephone rings MIRIAM goes to it*)

MIRIAM Hello No, we completed that call, operator (*Hangs up*)

MARY Cigarette?

MIRIAM (*suddenly*) Listen

MARY There's nothing you can say I haven't heard

MIRIAM Sure? I come from a world where a woman's got to come out on top—or it's just too damned bad Maybe I got a new slant

MARY (*wearily*) All right, Miriam Talk to me about my—lawful hus-

band Talk to me about security—
What does it all come to? Compromise

MIRIAM What the hell? A woman's
compromised the day she's born

MARY You can't compromise with
utter defeat He doesn't want me

MIRIAM How do you know?

MARY How do I know—why else am
I here?

MIRIAM (*a pause Then, mock-tragically*) Because you've got no guts,
Mary Haines It happened to me—
I lost my man, too

MARY (*smiling*) You?

MIRIAM Oh, it only happened once
Got wise to myself after that Look,
how did I lose him? We didn't have
enough dough to get married I
wouldn't sleep with him until we did
I had ideals—God knows where I got
'em I held out on him—(*Sighs*)
Can you beat it? I liked him a lot
better than I've ever liked anybody
since I never held out again—
What'd my Romeo do? Got himself
another girl I made a terrible stink
Why shouldn't I? I should But what
I ought not to have done was say—
good-bye I was like you

MARY I don't understand

MIRIAM Then get a load of this I
should of licked that girl where she
licked me—in the hay

MARY Miriam!

MIRIAM That's where you win in
the first round And if I know men,
that's still Custer's Last Stand (MARY

walks away from her) Shocked you?
You're too modest You're ashamed
O K, sister But my idea of love is
that love isn't ashamed of nothing

MARY (*turning to her*) A good argu-
ment, Miriam So modern So simple
Sex the cause, sex the cure It's
too simple, Miriam Your love battles
are for — lovers — or professionals
(*Gently*) Not for a man and woman
who've been married twelve quiet
years! Oh, I don't mean I wouldn't
love Stephen's arms around me
again But I wouldn't recapture, if I
could, our—youth passion That was
the wonderful young thing we had
That was part of our youth, like the
—babies But not the thing that made
him my husband, that made me his
wife—Stephen needed me! He *need-
ed* me for twelve years Stephen
doesn't need me any more

MIRIAM I get it (*Phone rings*)
That's why I'm marrying this guy
Fowler He needs me like hell If I
don't marry him he'll drink himself
to death in a month, the poor dope

MARY (*at the telephone*) Yes? No,
operator, we completed—you say,
New York is calling Mrs Haines?
I'll take that call— (*To MIRIAM*)
Stephen!

MIRIAM Listen, make him that
speech you just made me!

MARY (*radiant*) I knew he'd call I
knew when the last moment came,
he'd realize he needed me

MIRIAM For God's sake, tell him
that *you* need him!

MARY Hello—hello? Stephen? Mary
Yes I'm very cheerful It's so good
to hear your voice, Stephen I—why,

yes, it's scheduled for tomorrow at 12—but, Stephen, I can— (*Frightened*) but, Stephen! No—of course—I haven't seen the papers. How could I, out here? (*There is a long pause*) Yes, I'd rather you told me Of course I understand the position you're both in No, I'm not bitter, not bitter at all—I—I hope you'll both be very happy No, I have no plans, no plans at all—Stephen, do you mind if I hang up? Good-bye, Stephen— Good-bye—

MIRIAM He's marrying her?

MARY Oh, God, why did I let this happen? We were married We were one person We had a good life Oh, God, I've been a fool!

MIRIAM Sure you have Haven't we all, sister?

MARY But she doesn't love him I do That's the way it is (*She goes to the window, and looks out There is a pause Then, violently*) But it's not ended if your heart doesn't say so It's not ended!

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

SCENE I

Early evening, two years later CRYSTAL's bathroom Left, a black marble-ized tub with frilled shower curtains In a niche, back of the tub, a gilded French telephone Right, a satin-skirted dressing table, covered with glittering toilet bottles and cosmetic jars Towel racks piled with embroidered bath-towels Center, a door to CRYSTAL's bedroom As the curtain rises, CRYSTAL is lolling in the bath, reading a magazine, smoking, as HELENE, a chic French maid, enters

HELENE Madame has been soaking an hour

Madame, monsieur is so anxious that you say good night to her

CRYSTAL (*rudely*) So what?

HELENE But, monsieur—

CRYSTAL Monsieur is going out with me and my friends, whether he likes it or not Has that kid gone home yet?

HELENE Mademoiselle Mary has just finished the supper with her daddy

CRYSTAL Listen, that kid doesn't want to bid me beddy-bye any more than I do He's tried for two years to cram us down each other's throat Let her go home to her mommer (*Passes HELENE a brush*) Here—scrub— Some day I'm going to slap that kid down She's too— (*As HELENE scrubs too hard*) Ow! You're taking my skin off— Oh, I'm so bored

I could— (*Hurls the soap across the room*) Helene, never marry a man who's deserted a "good woman." He's as cheerful as a man who's murdered his poor old mother (*Telephone rings*) Get out! And, Helene, when Mrs. Fowler comes, keep her downstairs, if you have to sit on her (*Exit HELENE* *CRYSTAL picks up the telephone* *Her voice melts*) Hello, darling, I'm in the tub. I'm shrivelled to a peanut waiting for this call. No, I'm not afraid of a shock. You ought to know— Oh, Buck, I'm going to miss you like nobody's business. I can't tell you what it did to me, locking the door on our little apartment— I'll say we had fun! Coma ti-y-yippy, what? Oh, no, say anything you like. This is the one place where I have some privacy— (*CRYSTAL'S back is to the door* *She does not hear a brief rap*) Listen, baby, must you really go to the coast? Oh, the hell with Mr. Goldwyn (*Enter LITTLE MARY* *She stands hesitantly against the door*) Listen, you don't have to tell me what you sacrificed to have a movie career. I've seen that cartoon you married. If Flora was ever a Countess, I'm the Duchess of Windsor. Well, Buck, maybe she's not such a half-wit, but— (*Sees LITTLE MARY*) Oh— call me back in two minutes. I've had a small interruption (*Hangs up*) Who told you to come in here?

LITTLE MARY (*politely*) Daddy
Good night (*Turns to go*)

CRYSTAL (*sweetly*) Oh, don't go, darling. Hand me that brush.

LITTLE MARY (*gently*) Please?

CRYSTAL Please (*LITTLE MARY gives her the brush*)

LITTLE MARY Good night (*Goes to the door*)

CRYSTAL My, you're in a hurry to tell Daddy about it.

LITTLE MARY About what?

CRYSTAL My talk on the telephone.

LITTLE MARY I don't understand grown-ups on the telephone. They all sound silly. Good night.

CRYSTAL Good night, who? (*A pause*) You've been told to call me. Auntie Crystal (*A pause*) Why don't you do it?

LITTLE MARY (*still edging to the door*) Yes.

CRYSTAL Yes, what?

LITTLE MARY (*lamely*) Yes, good night.

CRYSTAL (*angry*) You sit down!

LITTLE MARY Oh, it's awfully hot in here. I've got my coat on.

CRYSTAL You heard me! (*LITTLE MARY sits on the stool before the dressing table, squirms*) We're going to have this out. I've done my damn—my level best to be friends with you, but you refuse to co-operate.

LITTLE MARY What?

CRYSTAL Co-operate.

LITTLE MARY (*nodding mechanically*) Co-operate.

CRYSTAL (*exasperated*) Answer my question. You don't like me. Why?

LITTLE MARY (*rising*) Well, good night, Crystal—

CRYSTAL I said, why?

LITTLE MARY (*very patiently*) Listen, Crystal, my mother told me I wasn't to be rude to you

CRYSTAL For the last time, young lady, you give me one good reason why you don't like me

LITTLE MARY I never said I didn't like you, Crystal

CRYSTAL But you don't like me, do you?

LITTLE MARY No, but I never said so I've been very polite, Crystal, considering you're something awfull

CRYSTAL Wait till your father hears this!

LITTLE MARY (*suddenly defiant*) Listen— Daddy doesn't think you're so wonderful any more!

CRYSTAL Did he tell you that?

LITTLE MARY No Daddy always pretends you're all right, but he's just ashamed to have Mother know what a mean, silly wife he's got And I don't tell Mother what *we* think, because you've made her cry enough, Crystal So I'm not going to co-operate, ever!

CRYSTAL Get out!

LITTLE MARY (*goes to the door, then turns, rather superior*) And another thing, I think this bathroom is perfectly ridiculous! Good night, Crystal! (*Exits The telephone rings CRYSTAL grabs it, irritable.*)

CRYSTAL. Yes, darling— That Haines brat God, she gets under my skin!— No, she didn't hear anything What good would it do her, anyhow? You're

off in the morning, and Lord knows we've been discreet— What? You are? (*Giggling*) Dining with the first Mrs Haines— Well, darling, lay off the gin It makes you talk too much— Well, just be careful, darling (*Enter SYLVIA, without knocking. She wears an elaborate evening gown, and carries a cocktail These two years have had no appreciable effect on SYLVIA She is her old Act One self again*)

SYLVIA Yoo-hoo! May I come in?

CRYSTAL (*in the telephone*) No, this is not the Aquarium It's Grand Central Station (*Hangs up*)

SYLVIA Who was that?

CRYSTAL A wrong number

SYLVIA You were talking to a man

CRYSTAL Pass me that sponge — Please

SYLVIA (*waiting on CRYSTAL*) Oh, Crystal, you know you can trust me.

CRYSTAL And that eye cup

SYLVIA There must be someone. After all, I've known Stephen for years He's really not your type I often wonder how you two got together I was telling my psychoanalyst about it You know, I've got to tell him everything

CRYSTAL That must be an awful effort

SYLVIA I don't mind discussing myself But talking about my friends does make me feel disloyal He says Stephen has a Guilt Complex

CRYSTAL What?

SYLVIA (*cheerfully*) He says men of Stephen's generation were brought up to believe that infidelity is a sin That's why he allowed Mary to divorce him, and that's why he married you, Crystal He had to marry you just to convince himself he was not a sexual monster

CRYSTAL Yes? Well, if Stephen is a sexual monster, psychoanalysis is through

SYLVIA And he says you've got a Cinderella Complex He says most American women have They're all brought up to believe that marriage to a rich man should be their aim in life He says we neither please the men nor function as child-bearing animals—

CRYSTAL (*bored and angry*) Will you function yourself into the bedroom?

SYLVIA (*hurt*) I don't think that's the way to talk to me, after all I've done for you When you married Stephen you didn't know a soul It wasn't easy to put you over Every-body was on Mary's side

CRYSTAL They still are They never miss a chance to remind me what a noble, useful woman Mary has become since she left Stephen

SYLVIA (*comforting*) My dear, she's miserable! Why, she never sees a soul

CRYSTAL She's having a dinner party tonight

SYLVIA Edith told me She's going And Flora

CRYSTAL Flora?

SYLVIA The Countess de Lage Mrs Buck Winston? My God, I have to laugh when I think of Flora actually turning that cowboy into a movie star Of course he's not my type, but he's positively the Chambermaid's Delight—

CRYSTAL (*fiercely*) Will you shut up?

SYLVIA But, Crystal—

CRYSTAL I said shut up— (*Calling*) Helene!

SYLVIA Well, I think you're very ungrateful!

CRYSTAL Well, take it up with your psychoanalyst (*HELENE enters*) Helene, draw the curtains I want to take a shower (*SYLVIA goes to the door as HELENE draws the curtains*) That's right, Sylvia—wait in the bedroom

SYLVIA (*sees the scales, decides to weigh herself*) Oh, dear, I've lost another pound I must remember to tell my analyst You know, everything means something (*The shower goes on HELENE exits SYLVIA gets off the scales During the following monologue, she goes to CRYSTAL's dressing table, where she examines all the bottles and jars*) But even my analyst says no woman should try to do as much as I do He says I attach too much value to my feminine friendships He says I have a Damon and Pythias Complex I guess I have given too much of myself to other women He says women are natural enemies— (*Picks up bottle*) Why, Crystal, I thought you didn't touch up your hair— (*Sniffing perfume*)

My dear, I wouldn't use this You smell it on every tart in New York That reminds me— (*Going to the shower curtains*) if you do have an affair, Crystal, for heaven's sake, be discreet Remember what Howard did to me, the skunk (*Peeking in*) My, you're putting on weight (*Going back to dressing table, she sits down, and begins to pry in all the drawers*) But men are so mercenary They think they own you body and soul, just because they pay the bills—I tried this cream It brought out pimples— Of course, Crystal, if you were smart, you'd have a baby It's the only real hold a woman has— (*HELENE enters*)

HELENE Monsieur says will madame be long?

SYLVIA Can't you see she's rushing?— (*HELENE exits The shower goes off*) Men are so selfish! When you're only making yourself beautiful for them (*Opens another drawer*) I wish I could find a man who would understand my need for a companion— (*Finds a key, examines it*) Why, Crystal, what are you doing with a key to the Gothic Apartments? (*CRYSTAL's head pops from behind the curtain*)

CRYSTAL What?— Oh— (*Nervously*) Oh, that! (*Playing for time*) Throw me a towel, Sylvia!

SYLVIA (*bringing her towel*) That's where Howard had me followed The doorman there is a professional black-

mailer! (*CRYSTAL has wrapped herself in a big towel, now steps from behind the shower curtains and sits on the rim of the tub to dry her legs*) I asked my psychoanalyst about him, and he said blackmailers are really perverts who can't think of a good perversion So they blackmail people instead

CRYSTAL (*going to the dressing-table*) Really? Well, he can't blackmail me now (*As she passes SYLVIA, she lightly snatches the key from her*) The Gothic Apartments are where Stephen and I had to go before the divorce I keep it for sentimental reasons (*Smiling, she drops the key back in the drawer, locks it*)

SYLVIA Poor Stephen! My dear, I thought tonight how tired he looked, and old Crystal, I've told you everything Tell me how long do you think you can be faithful to Stephen?

CRYSTAL (*making up her face*) Well, life plays funny tricks Th—urge might hit me tomorrow

SYLVIA I doubt it, pet You're a typical blonde

CRYSTAL So what?

SYLVIA (*loftily*) Most blondes are fngid

CRYSTAL Really? Well, maybe that's just a dirty piece of brunette propaganda!

CURTAIN

SCENE II

Eleven o'clock the same night MARY's bedroom A charming, simple room. Left, a door to the dressing-room Right, a door to the hall As the curtain rises, JANE is arranging a number of evening wraps on the bed MIRIAM, MARY and NANCY are entering

MIRIAM Thanks, baby, a lot! I never was at a wetter dinner

MARY It was a success I left Reno two years ago today This was a memorial dinner for you old Renoites, and your new husbands

MIRIAM I get it Listen, there's no soap eating out your heart, sister!

NANCY Mary, if I had a heroine in one of my books who behaved the way you do, my two readers would never believe it No one man is worth it

MIRIAM Say, the whole Racquet Club's not worth it—Speaking of my dear husband Howard—the skunk—can I have a whiskey and soda?

NANCY Make it two
(JANE exits, right)

MIRIAM I lay off when Howard's around I'm weaning him from the bottle by easy stages He's in the secondary stage now

NANCY What stage is that?

MIRIAM He puts ice in

MARY How's matrimony, Miriam? Making a go of it?

MIRIAM I'm doing a reconstruction job that makes Boulder Dam look like an egg-cup
(Enter PEGGY, right)

PEGGY Oh, Mary, can't we get off to the party? I have to get home early Little John always wakes up Little John said the cutest thing the other day (A dramatic pause) He said da-da—!

NANCY When does he enter Columbia?
(Enter JANE with tray and highballs)

MARY Jane, tell Mrs Winston the ladies are ready to go

JANE Mrs Winston, ma'am, is drinking with the gentlemen

MARY Well, tell her to come up
(Exit JANE)

MIRIAM What's the hurry? Two more snootfuls, and Flora will float up on her own breath
(Enter EDITH, right)

EDITH (petulantly) Mary, I wish you had an elevator in this house It's so difficult to walk upstairs in my condition

MARY Edith, are you Catholic or just careless?

EDITH Mary, isn't this your old furniture?

MARY Yes

EDITH I think you should get rid of it. There's nothing that keeps a woman so in the dumps as sleeping in a bed with old associations. Mary, you're carrying this nunnery business too far. How do you expect to find anyone else, if you don't make an effort?

MARY I don't want anyone, Edith (*Mock cynical*) I hate men! Men are awful—

EDITH Oh, they're not all like Stephen, dear

MARY I saw plenty of men when I came back from Reno. They're all alike. They never leave you at your own front door without a wrestling-match.

EDITH You know I asked Phelps about that once. I said, "Why does a man always act like a Don Juan in a taxi?" And he said it was a hang-over from their bachelor days when a man's sex life was conditioned by the click of the meter.

MIRIAM It beats me how in a taxi, the nicest guy turns into Harpo Marx.

EDITH Mary, want to hear something about Sylvia? (*MARY, MIRIAM, NANCY and PEGGY chorus, "No!"*) Well, Sylvia's going to a psychoanalyst. She says you destroyed all her faith in friendship.

MARY As if any woman needed to go to a psychoanalyst to find out she can't trust women.

EDITH Mary, you've grown awfully hard since you deserted your old friends.

MARY Isn't "wise" the word? I'm beginning to understand women.

NANCY Too bad! It's the beginning of woman's inhumanity to woman.

EDITH (*moving to door, left*) Oh, they're going to talk philosophy, Peggy. Come on in here while I powder my nose.

PEGGY Edith, did I tell you how little John said da-da?

EDITH Listen, I wouldn't care if this one stood up and sang the Star Spangled Banner! (*They exit, as enter MRS MOREHEAD, in street clothes, right*)

MRS MOREHEAD Oh, hello, girls! Hello, dear. Party over?

MARY Enjoy the movies, Mother?

MRS MOREHEAD I wish I could make up my mind whether or not I like Shirley Temple. (*Enter the COUNTESS DE LAGE, right. She is a tangle of tulle and jewels. She has a slight "edge" on.*)

COUNTESS Such a lovely dinner! It's so wonderful to see all our lives temporarily settled!

MARY My mother, Mrs. Morehead, Mrs. Winston, Mrs. Buck Winston.

MRS MOREHEAD (*trying to place the name*) Buck Winston?

MARY The movie star

MRS MOREHEAD Ah, yes! (*Pleasantly*) My granddaughter adores your son on the screen

COUNTESS (*good-naturedly*) I dare say the public does see Buck as just a boy And it is a trifle absurd *me* being married to a movie star But, Mrs Morehead, you wouldn't believe how many of my Newport friends who ridiculed Buck when I married him positively claw for invitations to Hollywood Mais là, East is East and West is West, but I always say Le Cinema is the Great Leveller!

MRS MOREHEAD You don't say! (*Edges to the hall door*)

COUNTESS Mrs Morehead, do whip into something, and come along with Mary to my party The Casino Roof Everyone's clamored to come I have no idea who's going to be there

MRS MOREHEAD Well, you're sure to know somebody (*To MARY*) Later, dear? (*MARY nods, MRS MOREHEAD escapes, right*)

COUNTESS (*gathering her wrap*) Mary, you're not coming?

MARY I'm very tired, Flora

COUNTESS Oh, you're cross because Buck's had a wee droppie

MIRIAM Don't be modest, Flora Your ducky is stinko

COUNTESS I do wish he wouldn't drink straight gin You know, he's not allowed to Mr Goldwyn put that in the new contract

MIRIAM I wish I'd had my marriage license drawn up by Mr Goldwyn

COUNTESS Mary, do come This is *really* our farewell party I'm never coming back to New York

MARY What's wrong with New York, Flora?

COUNTESS Well, when Buck isn't working we're not going to live anywhere (*Whispering*) Mary, can I trust you?

MARY Of course, Flora!

COUNTESS (*to the others*) You will keep this just between the four of us!

MIRIAM Shoot, Flora, it's a nationwide hookup!

COUNTESS (*settling herself beside MARY on the foot of the bed*) Well, you know how Buck was? (*Wistful*) So— so impassioned?

MIRIAM The boy had something

COUNTESS (*tartly*) Well, he hasn't got it any more, Miriam! First, I thought it was just gin, interfering with his libido— (*Tearfully*) But now I think Buck is deceiving me—

NANCY How incredible!

COUNTESS Well, I have no proof Except he comes home every afternoon smelling of a strange perfume

MARY Where does he say he's been?

COUNTESS Visiting his horse But Tixie was shipped to Hollywood last week You remember, I was photographed with her in the baggage-car? Now he says he's been going to the

Grand Central Gymnasium But I telephoned today Some great oaf answered I said "Is Buck Winston there?" he said "Who? No" So I said "My dear good man, he comes every day" So he said "My mistake, lady, he's inside now boxing with Rudolph Valentino"

MARY Poor Floral

COUNTESS (*practical*) That's why I think it's safer just to keep floating around

MARY I understand—l'amour

COUNTESS L'amour, yes, but jamais, (*She has her lucid moments*) jamais lopsided amour!

MARY (*laughing*) Lopsided amour is better than no amour at all Flora, let him make a fool of you Let him do anything he wants, as long as he stays He's taking the trouble to deceive you (*Half to herself*) And if he took the trouble, he really must have cared—

NANCY The Voice of Experience

MIRIAM (*to COUNTESS*) Come on, chin up

NANCY That's right Both of them! (*Enter PEGGY and EDITH*)

COUNTESS (*rising*) Oh, cherries, you missed it! I was just saying—now will you keep this just among the six of us?—I suspect Buck of being unfaithful Of course, it's my own fault I should have had him watched The way I did all the others I wish I'd found out where he's had that apartment!

PEGGY An apartment—?

COUNTESS Where would you expect him to go? Central Park? Why, it's winter

PEGGY Oh, I've always heard people went to hotels

COUNTESS But, chere, Buck couldn't go to a hotel You know what would happen At the most inopportune moment someone would say "Mr Winston, may I have your autograph?" It happened to us on our wedding night I would have sent for the manager, but it was the manager asking for the autograph Ah, well, off to Hollywood in the morning! That's safe! (*Moving to door*) Dear Mr Hays will protect me from Dietrich and Harlow (*Exits, right*)

EDITH (*getting her wrap*) Darling, you really won't come to Flora's party?

MARY No, Edith!

EDITH Then I can tell you Of course, I know how you feel about your Ex—and his New Deal—though I think you'd be glad he's so happy

MARY I am

EDITH Sylvia telephoned tonight She and Crystal and Stephen are going on to the Roof with a theatre party Well, darling, I don't feel much like going myself I loathe this dress My husband says I look as though I were going to sing in it (*Exits, right*)

NANCY Think I'll go, too, Mary! It's a good chance to study Park Avenue's flora and fauna And I'm writing a new book It's called "Gone with the Ice-man," or "Sex Has No Place in the Home" (*Exits with PEGGY*)

MIRIAM (to MARY) Listen, Queen, change your mind! Let's go on to the party!

MARY No, Minam

MIRIAM Well, I'm going Wish you could see the cooing-fest Howard and I put on for Sylvia— Shall I spit in Crystal's eye for you? (MARY shakes her head) You're passing up a swell chance, sister! Where I spit no grass grows ever! (Exits JANE enters, right MARY begins to unfasten her dress, takes off her jewels, lays them on the dresser)

MARY Jane, turn down my bed

JANE Yes, ma'am
(MARY goes into the boudoir, left)

MARY (offstage) Did Mary have a nice time with her father?

JANE (turning down the bed) Well, ma'am, you know how she is when she comes home

MARY (offstage) I'm afraid she's never going to get used to it

JANE She takes after you, ma'am, if you'll pardon me Always brooding Sometimes, ma'am, I think it would be better if she didn't see her father Or maybe, ma'am—though it's none of my business—if you could find some nice man—
(Enter MRS MOREHEAD, right, in a wrapper and slippers)

MRS MOREHEAD Going to bed, darling?

MARY (offstage) Yes, Mother

MRS MOREHEAD Shall we chat for a moment? Jane, I'll have a cigarette

JANE (surprised) Mrs Morehead!

MRS MOREHEAD Those dreadful women made me nervous Why Mrs Haines tolerates them even once a year is beyond me!

MARY (entering, in a nightgown) An object lesson Smoking, Mother?

MRS MOREHEAD Oh, you, too?

MARY Me too?

MRS MOREHEAD I just felt that spooky pinch You'd think after ten years your father's ghost might have grown more tolerant

JANE Good night, ma'am (Switches off side-lights)

MARY AND MRS MOREHEAD Good night, Jane (Exit JANE MARY gets into bed, opens a book, flips through it)

MRS MOREHEAD (sitting on the bed) Good book?

MARY Don't know Nancy just gave it to me It's about—love Poetry All about love (Reads) "When love beckons to you, follow him, though his ways are hard and steep And when his wings enfold you, yield to him— Though his voice may shatter your dreams as the North Wind lays waste the garden "

MRS MOREHEAD Well, all I can say is, that's very tactless of Nancy (Suddenly) Oh, Mary, I wish you could find—

MARY (slams book shut) Some nice man We've been all over that before, Mother I had the only one I ever wanted, I lost him—

MRS. MOREHEAD. It wasn't entirely your fault

MARY If I hadn't listened to everyone, everything but my own heart!

MRS. MOREHEAD He loved her

MARY He still does Though you know, Mother, I'm just beginning to doubt it

MRS. MOREHEAD Why?

MARY Because so many people, like Edith, make a point of telling me how much he loves her Oh, Mother, I'm terribly tired

MRS. MOREHEAD Well, do cheer up, darling Living alone has its compensations You can go where you please, wear what you please and eat what you please I had to wait twenty years to order the kind of meal I liked! Your father called it bird-food— And, heaven knows, it's marvelous to be able to sprawl out in bed, like a swastika Good night, darling

MARY Good night, Mother

MRS. MOREHEAD Don't read by that light You'll hurt your eyes (*Exits MARY props herself against the pillows, begins to read*)

MARY "But if in your fear you would seek only love's peace and love's pleasure, then it is better for you to pass out of love's threshing-floor, into the seasonless world, where you shall laugh, but not all of your laughter, and weep, but not all of your tears" (*Enter LITTLE MARY, in a nightgown, barefooted, and very sleepy*)

LITTLE MARY Mother?

MARY Darling, what's the matter?

LITTLE MARY (*goes to the bed*). I had a bad dream!

MARY Darling, what was it?

LITTLE MARY I forget Let me crawl in with you, Mother

MARY (*helping her in*) I'm so restless

LITTLE MARY I don't mind if you kick me You know, that's the only good thing about divorce, you get to sleep with your mother (*She kisses her A pause*) I taste lipstick

MARY I haven't washed yet Good night, darling

LITTLE MARY You know, you're a very sympathetic mother

MARY Am I?

LITTLE MARY Oh, yes So would you just tickle my back?

MARY All right But go to sleep— (*A pause*)

LITTLE MARY She's so silly!

MARY Who?

LITTLE MARY Crystal

MARY Ssh—

LITTLE MARY I told Daddy so to night

MARY Oh, you mustn't hurt Daddy's feelings.

LITTLE MARY Mother?

MARY Sssh!

LITTLE MARY I think Daddy doesn't love her as much as you any more

MARY What makes you think so, Mary?

LITTLE MARY He told me so after I saw Crystal

MARY What?

LITTLE MARY But he said I mustn't tell you because, naturally, why do you care how he feels (A pause) Oh, don't stop tickling, Mother (A pause) Mother?

MARY Yes?

LITTLE MARY What's anyone want with a telephone in the bathroom?

MARY I don't know Sssh!

LITTLE MARY Crystal has one She was awful mad when I walked in on her while she was talking

MARY Sleep, Mary!

LITTLE MARY Mother, who's the Duchess of Windsor?

MARY What a question!

LITTLE MARY Well, Crystal said on the telephone if somebody else was a Countess, she was the Duchess of Windsor!

MARY Really!

LITTLE MARY Good night, Mother

MARY. Good night, baby (A pause.)

LITTLE MARY I wonder if it was the same man you had for dinner

MARY Maybe, ssh!

LITTLE MARY I thought so

MARY (curiously) If who was the same man?

LITTLE MARY Crystal was talking to, so lovey-dovey

MARY (protestingly) Oh, Mary!

LITTLE MARY Well, the front part was the same, Mother

MARY (a pause) The front part of what?

LITTLE MARY His name, Mother!

MARY (taking her by the shoulders) What are you talking about?

LITTLE MARY That man Crystal was talking to in the bathtub

MARY (half shaking her) Mary, what do you mean?

LITTLE MARY I mean his front name was Buck, Mother! (MARY gets quickly out of bed, rings bell on table) Oh, Mother, what are you doing?

MARY Go to sleep, darling (Begins to pull on her stockings)

LITTLE MARY Grown-ups are so sudden Are you dressing?

MARY Yes, Mary

LITTLE MARY You forgot you were invited to a party?

LITTLE MARY I remember now I had something to tell you!

MARY Almost, Mary

MARY (*eagerly*) Yes?

LITTLE MARY What are you going to do when you get there, Mother?

LITTLE MARY (*dolefully*) I was awfully rude to Crystal

MARY I don't know yet But I've got to do something

MARY I'll forgive you this time
(*Enter JANE*)

LITTLE MARY Well, have a good time! (*Rolls over Then suddenly sits up*) Mother!

JANE You rang, ma'am?

MARY Yes?

MARY Yes My evening dress, Jane and a taxi—and don't stand there gaping! Hurry! Hurry!

CURTAIN

SCENE III

Later, the same night The Powder Room at the Casino Roof The decoration is rich, tawdry and modernistic Right, a swinging door from the lobby Left, another to the washrooms The rest of the wall space, left and right, is taken up by counter-like dressing tables and mirrors The rear wall is a great window overlooking the glitter of midnight Manhattan An overstuffed sofa and an armchair upholstered in modernistic fabric Near the door, right, a screen hides the coat-rack By this, a chair for SADIE, a little old woman in a black maid's uniform and apron As the curtain rises, SADIE is reading a tabloid, which she puts down when two flashily-dressed GIRLS enter from the lobby They check their wraps

FIRST GIRL It's jammed

FIRST WOMAN How incredibly foul!

SECOND GIRL Oh, my boy friend'll get a table (*Enter two SOCIETY WOMEN They move directly across the stage to the washroom*)

SECOND WOMAN I'm heartbroken But I have to be philosophical, after all missing one winter in Palm Beach really won't kill me (*Enter "CIGARETTES," a pretty girl in a white satin blouse and short black skirt She carries a tray of cigarettes*)

FIRST WOMAN My dear, won't he let you?

SECOND WOMAN No he won't.

FIRST GIRL (*moving left*) Thought you and the boy friend had a row?

SECOND GIRL We did

FIRST GIRL What about?

SECOND GIRL His wife

FIRST GIRL His wife? What night has she got to butt in?

SECOND GIRL He's got some cock-eyed idea that after twenty years he ain't kick her out (*They exit, left*)

CIGARETTES Jeepers, why don't they get sick of this joint night after night! Same music, same act, same faces

SADIE They like familiarity It gives them confidence

CIGARETTES I'll say they like familiarity Most of them shoving around that floor would be more comfortable with each other in bed

SADIE In bed? If they was to get that over, what would they use for conversation? (*Enter a DOWAGER and a DEBUTANTE, right They move directly across stage*)

DOWAGER —Dancing like that! What can those boys think of you?

DEBUTANTE (*wearily*) Oh, Mother

DOWAGER Guzzling champagne like that! After all I spent on your education!

DEBUTANTE Oh, Mother

DOWAGER It's one thing to come out It's quite another to go under the table! (*They exit, left*)

SADIE Getting married, dearest?

CIGARETTES (*sinking, very tired, on the arm of a chair*) As soon as Mike gets a job It ain't fair! Why, we could get married and have a family on that coat— Sadie, wh'd'ya say if I was to tell you I'm a Commyanist?

SADIE I'd say ya was bats I was a Townsendsite Where'd it get me? (*Enter the COUNTESS, piloted by NANCY and MIRIAM She is tight and tearful MIRIAM and NANCY get her, with some difficulty, to the sofa*)

COUNTESS (*tacking*) How could Buck do such a thing to me! Oh, the Dr Jekyll! The Mr Hyde! Which was which?

MIRIAM Pipe down or you'll put an awful dent in his career, Flora

COUNTESS What of my career? I've had five husbands Buck's the first one who ever told me what he really thought of me—in public

NANCY It takes all kinds of husbands to round out a career like yours, Flora

COUNTESS He told me he'd been deceiving me for months Right in the middle of the Organ-Grinder (*Kicks off shoes*) Oh, I feel so—superfluous!

MIRIAM (*to SADIE*) A bromo-seltzer

COUNTESS Bromo-seltzer? Qu'est-que c'est que ça?

NANCY It will settle your—superfluity Flora, did he tell you the lady's name?

COUNTESS (*indignant*) Certainly not, Nancy He's not that drunk

MIRIAM (*as SADIE exits, right*). And another drink for Mrs. Winston!

COUNTRESS No, Miriam He wouldn't tell me her name, because she's a married woman Buck is very proletarian, but he's not a bounder He just said *she* was a natural blonde

NANCY That ought to narrow down the field considerably

COUNTRESS He said she was pretty as a painted wagon

MIRIAM Oh, you're not such a bad calhope. Snap out of it, Flora You know, you're going to forgive him

COUNTRESS (*firmly*) I'd forgive unfaithfulness, but not base ingratitude I rescued him from those praines I married him What thanks do I get? (*Wailing*) He says he'll be a cockeyed coyote if he'll herd an old beef like me back to the coast!

NANCY Let this be your lesson Don't let your next husband become financially independent of you

COUNTRESS Now, don't lecture me, Nancy Every time I marry I learn something This has taught me once and for all—you can't expect noblesse oblige from a cowboy—(*Sitting up*) Ohhh, my eyes! They're full of mascara

NANCY (*helping her off the couch To MIRIAM*) We've got to get her home Get Buck, and meet us in the lobby

MIRIAM (*exits, right*) We're headin' for the last round-up!

COUNTRESS. If there's a telephone in here I'm going to call up Mr Gold-

wyn. (*Exits, left, with NANCY, as SADIE, with a bromo-seltzer, enters, right, followed by CIGARETTES*)

CIGARETTES What's it all about?

SADIE (*picks up COUNTRESS' shoes, as she crosses, left*) Some man

CIGARETTES Bet he isn't worth it

SADIE You can always collect on that one (*Exits, left, as re-enter, left, the DOWAGER and the DEBUTANTE*)

DOWAGER —Laughing and joking with those boys like that!

DEBUTANTE Yes, Mother

DOWAGER What can they think of you?

DEBUTANTE Yes, Mother

DOWAGER And don't think I didn't overhear that Princeton boy call me an old drizzle-puss, either! (*Exits right*)

SADIE (*enters, left, to CIGARETTES*) She wants gin in her bromo-seltzer (*Enter MARY and MIRIAM, right*)

MIRIAM (*protesting*) Crystal's not in here I don't think she's in the joint

MARY She's coming I know it

MIRIAM So what are you going to do when you find her? (*SADIE takes MARY's wrap*)

MARY I don't know But I've got to find her tonight. Buck's going to Hollywood in the morning

MIRIAM Say, why don't you settle this matter with Stephen?

MARY I have no proof, I tell you! But if Buck is as drunk as you say, he'll give away something

MIRIAM Listen, he's been trying all night to give Flora away to the doorman Got a twenty-dollar bill?

MARY Yes

MIRIAM That'll lock him in the men's room till we need him
(*Exits, right, with MARY, as enter, left, the two SOCIETY WOMEN They cross the stage*)

FIRST WOMAN Not three pounds?

SECOND WOMAN Three pounds!

FIRST WOMAN How divine! Aren't you ecstatic?

SECOND WOMAN Yes, but it's the moral satisfaction Just bananas and milk for one whole week! That called for enormous character! (*They exit, right*)

CIGARETTES (to SADIE) Enormous character! Well, she'll need it, all right Comes the Revolution, she'll diet plenty (*Enter PEGGY and EDITH, right They powder, at the mirror, right*)

PEGGY I wish I hadn't come

EDITH Well, your husband didn't want you to

PEGGY (*goes for her wrap*) Flora was disgusting!

EDITH But it was funny Even the kettledrummer was laughing

PEGGY You never miss anything.
(*SADIE gives EDITH and PEGGY their wraps*)

EDITH My dear, who could stand the life we lead without a sense of humor? But Flora is a fool Always remember, Peggy, it's matrimonial suicide to be jealous when you have a really good reason

PEGGY Edith, don't you ever get tired of giving advice?

EDITH Listen, Peggy, I'm the only happy woman you know Why? I don't ask Phelps or any man to understand me How could he? I'm a woman (*Pulls down her corset*) And I don't try to understand them They're just animals Who am I to quarrel with the way God made them? I've got security So I put my faith in the law And I say "What the hell?" And let nature take its course—it's going to, anyway (*They exit, right, as enter the two GIRLS, left*)

SECOND GIRL (*powdering at the mirror, left*) —So there we were on Saturday night and it's Atlantic City And he says "I gotta go home tomorrow, baby!" And I says (*Pulls up her stockings*) "Why dja got to?" And he says "My wife always expects me home on Easter Sunday" So I says "What's she expect ya to do? Lay an egg?"

FIRST GIRL They got no sentiment (*Enter, right, a GIRL, in distress The shoulder strap of her very low décolletage has broken*)

GIRL IN DISTRESS (to SADIE) Have you got a safety pin? I was never so embarrassed! (*SADIE gets pin*)

SECOND GIRL (*crossing, right*) So I told him, "I had a great career until you made me give up the stage, you lunkhead For what? A couple of cheesy diamond bracelets? A lousy car, which every time it breaks down you got to have the parts shipped over from Italy (*The GIRLS exit*)"

GIRL IN DISTRESS So he says, "Don't look now, you've just dropped something!" (*Enter CRYSTAL and SYLVIA, right They move to check their wraps with SADIE*)

SADIE Just a minute, please

SYLVIA (*they go to mirror left*) Stephen is in a mood

CRYSTAL He can take it and like it

GIRL IN DISTRESS (*to SADIE*) Does it show now?

SADIE Not what it did before, miss

GIRL IN DISTRESS Thank you (*She exits, right SADIE takes CRYSTAL's and SYLVIA's wraps*)

CRYSTAL Is my mouth on straight?

SYLVIA Crystal, you didn't come here to see somebody, did you?

CRYSTAL Oh, Sylvia, can't you lay off that for a minute? (*Enter MARY and MIRIAM, left*)

MARY (*moving forward resolutely*) Mrs Haines, this is a great pleasure!

CRYSTAL (*turning*) I beg your pardon?

MARY Such a lovely party! I was afraid you weren't coming (*Introducing CRYSTAL and MIRIAM, MIR-*

IAM and SYLVIA) Mrs Fowler, Mrs. Haines, Mrs Fowler, Mrs Fowler

MIRIAM (*graciously*) Chawmed

SYLVIA (*bridling*) This is humiliating

MARY Modern life is complicated When you came in I was just telling Miriam—

CRYSTAL Oh, come along, Sylvia The lady is tight

SYLVIA Mary, when did you begin drinking?

MARY (*to CRYSTAL*) Early in the evening, with Mr Winston You know Mr Winston, don't you?

CRYSTAL (*at the door*) I'm afraid I don't

SYLVIA Of course you do, Crystal I introduced you to him Don't you remember?

CRYSTAL Oh, yes, a cocktail party

MARY Well, he's in the lobby now, waiting for someone, Mrs Haines, and drunker than you can possibly imagine You'd find him very difficult to handle, in front of Stephen (*CRYSTAL suddenly changes her mind about going into the lobby, moves toward the washroom*)

SYLVIA Crystal, where are you going?

CRYSTAL I won't stand here and listen to drive!

MARY I wouldn't go in there, either, Mrs Haines His wife's in there now,

having hysterics She's found out that Buck has been deceiving her

CRYSTAL Really! What has that to do with me?

MARY A good deal, I'm afraid You seem to be the woman

SYLVIA (*delighted*) Why, Crystal! —Are you?

CRYSTAL If he used my name, it's a lie! He's just the cheap sort— I'll tell my husband

MARY You'll have to Tomorrow it will be common gossip I don't think Stephen will like it

SYLVIA Oh, Crystal, he's going to loathe it! But my psychoanalyst is going to adore it

CRYSTAL (*going to her*) What are you trying to do? Pin something on me, in front of witnesses?

SYLVIA Whatever she's driving at, Crystal— (*Pointing to MIRIAM*) that little tramp put her up to it!

CRYSTAL (*to SYLVIA*) Keep out of this!

MIRIAM Yeah, check it, Sylvia, we're minor league this evening

CRYSTAL All right, Mrs Haines, you've been listening to the ravings of a conceited fool What did he tell you?

MARY (*playing for time, or inspiration*) Really, Mrs Haines, this is very embarrassing

CRYSTAL (*brazening it out*) Yes, Mrs. Haines, isn't it? Exactly what do you think you know about me?

MARY. Everything! (*A pause, CRYSTAL laughs*)

CRYSTAL Then why are you standing here talking to me You ought to be outside spilling it to Stephen You're bluffing Come along, Sylvia!

MARY (*also moving to door CRYSTAL stops*) That's very good advice I will tell Stephen

CRYSTAL Oh, he wouldn't believe you

SYLVIA Oh, you can't tell, Crystal! He's terribly fond of Mary

CRYSTAL Now get this straight, Mrs Haines I like what I got, and I'm going to keep it You handed me your husband on a silver platter (*Enter NANCY, left*) But I'm not returning the compliment I can't be stampeded by gossip What you believe and what Stephen believes will cut no ice in a divorce court You need proof and you haven't got it When Mr Winston comes to his senses, he'll apologize And Stephen will have no choice, but to accept—my explanations Now that's that! Good night!

MARY (*desperately*) I hope Mrs Winston will accept your explanations

CRYSTAL What have I got to explain to her?

MARY (*with a conviction she does not feel*) What about the apartment?

CRYSTAL What apartment?

MARY You know as well as I do

CRYSTAL Oh, stop trying to put two and two together—

MARY Oh, Mrs Winston did that
She had you watched—she's seen you
both

CRYSTAL (*defiantly*) Where?

MARY Going in, and coming out!

CRYSTAL Going in and coming out
where? (*A pause*) You're lying!

SYLVIA (*warningly*) I wouldn't be
so sure, Crystal!

MIRIAM Sounds like the McCoy to
me, Crystal

CRYSTAL Shut up!

SYLVIA Oh, Crystal, why didn't you
confide in me? (*CRYSTAL turns to the
door again, triumphant*)

MARY (*dismayed*) Sylvia, didn't she?

SYLVIA Certainly *not*! (*CRYSTAL
smiles very pleased with herself*)
She's the cat that walks alone (*Goes
to CRYSTAL*) Why, Crystal, I could
have told you some place *much safer*
than the Gothic Apartments!

CRYSTAL (*exploding*) Why, you big,
loud-mouthed idiot!

SYLVIA How dare you!

CRYSTAL I'd like to slap your stupid
face

SYLVIA (*backing up*) Oh, Mary, how
dare she?

MIRIAM Oh, I've got a job to do on
Flora (*She pats SYLVIA affection-
ately*) Kiss you when I get back,
Sylvia (*Exits, left*)

NANCY And I'll explain the facts of
life to Stephen (*NANCY exits, right*)

CRYSTAL (*to MARY, fiercely*) You're
trying to break up my marriage!

SYLVIA The way you did hers, you
flooosie!

CRYSTAL (*nasty*) Well, maybe you're
welcome to my—left-overs

MARY (*calmly*) I'll take them, thank
you

SYLVIA Why, Mary, haven't you
any pride?

MARY That's right No, no pride,
that's a luxury a woman in love can't
afford

(*Enter COUNTESS and MIRIAM, left
MIRIAM goes to SADIE, gets the
COUNTESS' and her own wraps*)

COUNTESS (*rushing for CRYSTAL*)
Oh, mon Dieu, mon Dieu!

MARY (*stopping her*) Flora, it's
really too bad—

COUNTESS (*to CRYSTAL*) You—you
painted wagon!

CRYSTAL So you're determined to
have a scandal, Mrs Haines

COUNTESS I'm the one who's going
to have the scandal Why, Mary,
she's no more a blonde naturelle than
I am What's the creature's name?
Miriam forgot to tell me

MARY Mrs Stephen Haines, cur-
rently

COUNTESS Is that the thing Stephen
left you for? Well, chere, all I can
say is, you're an idiot! I hope I never

live to see the day when an obvious piece like that conquers *me* on the champs d'amour! (*She exits, right, followed by MIRIAM*)

CRYSTAL (*to MARY*) That damn fool didn't know (*SADIE gives MARY her wrap*)

MARY I'm afraid she didn't (*Enter NANCY, right*)

NANCY There's a gentleman called Mr Haines He says he's been waiting a long time for his wife— (*CRYSTAL moves to get her wrap*)

MARY (*stepping between her and SADIE*) Tell him, I am coming (*Exit NANCY quickly*)

SYLVIA Mary, what a dirty female trick!

CRYSTAL Yes! From the great, noble little woman! You're just a cat, like all the rest of us!

MARY Well, I've had two years to sharpen my claws (*Waves her hand gaily to SYLVIA*) Jungle-red, Sylvia! Good night, ladies! (*Exits*)

CURTAIN

“Having Wonderful Time”

BY ARTHUR KOBER

TO MARC
WITH MANY THANKS

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Note The characters and situations in this play are wholly fictional and imaginative, do not portray, and are not intended to portray, any actual person or persons.

"Having Wonderful Time" was first produced at the Lyceum Theatre, New York City, by Marc Connelly, on February 20, 1937, and closed on January 8, 1938. Following is the original cast:

| | |
|------------------|----------------------------------|
| LOIS | Connie Lent |
| SOPHIE | Kay Loring |
| ROSALIND | Ann Thomas |
| TEDDY STERN | Katherine Locke |
| FAY FROMKIN | Janet Fox |
| MAC FINKLE | B. D. Kranz |
| HENRIETTA BRILL | Lois Reichard |
| MIRIAM ROBBINS | Muriel Campbell |
| CHICK KESSLER | Jules Garfield |
| HI | Mitchell Grayson |
| ELI | Shimen Ruskin |
| SCHMUTZ | Solen Burry |
| BARNEY | Edward Mann |
| ABE TOBIAS | Wolfe Barzell |
| CHARLIE | Herbert Ratner |
| JOE | William Sweetland |
| MR. G | Hudy Block |
| MRS. G | Ann Brody |
| BIRDIE | Helen Golden |
| REBA | Irene Winston |
| TINY | Irving Israel |
| THE HONEYMOONERS | { Herbert Vigran Sandra Gould |
| ITCHY FLEXNER | Philip Van Zandt |
| SAMMY | Tony Kraber |
| MAXINE | Henriette Kaye |
| GUSSIE | Mona Conrad |
| PINKIE AARONSON | Sheldon Leonard |

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| KITTY | Lily Winton |
| Doc | Cornel Wilde |
| A CERTAIN PARTY | Frank Gould |
| CAMP GUESTS, WAITERS, ETC | Helen Edwards, Estelle Raymond, Laura Windsor, Connie Ernst, Peggy Craven, Richard Allen, MacFarlane Roberts, Bob Strauss, Juanita Beatty Tony Heath and others |

Associate Producer **Bèla Blau**

Settings by **Stewart Chaney**

SCENES

The action of the play takes place at **CAMP KARE-FREE**, in the Berkshires,
during August

ACT ONE

SCENE I

Teddy's Bungalow About noon

SCENE II

The Dining Room Ten minutes later

SCENE III

Back Porch of the Social Hall That night

ACT TWO

SCENE I

Eagle Rock Six days later

SCENE II

Teddy's Bungalow Eleven P M that night

SCENE III

Pinkie's Bungalow A short time later

ACT THREE

SCENE I

Teddy's Bungalow The following morning

SCENE II

The Dining Room A short time later

"HAVING WONDERFUL TIME"

ACT ONE

SCENE I

"A brilliant grammarian," reads the Camp Kare-Free brochure with which owner ABE TOBIAS woos potential guests, "will try through picturesque verbiage to glowingly paint a beautiful picture of camp life" MR TOBIAS then quickly sounds a note of warning "One must remember, however, that there is an ancient adage which goes, 'Seeing is believing' Because we are disciples of this motto, we have prepared this little booklet, profusely illustrated with photographs, in the hopes that these pictures will tell you more than we can utter, no matter how flowery our language Perhaps, as you scan the pages, you will be inspired to visit Camp Kare-Free, where friendships are formed which endure a lifetime, where dull care and trouble quickly vanish 'neath Nature's magic spell"

The photographs show the Kare-Free lake front with its many canoes and rowboats prominently banked in the foreground, it calls attention to the social hall facing the lake, and assures you that it has a staff of well-known artists and musicians captained by "that jovial personality, an expert technician in the art of Thespis," "ITCHY" FLEXNER, it emphasizes the Kare-Free sunset, "a glorious, colorful souvenir you will talk about for years"

Turn the pages and your eye will be met with camera studies of the championship tennis courts, the eighteen-hole tournament golf course, the dining hall showing a group of happy vacationists seated on the steps "after a wholesome meal prepared by a staff of expert cooks well versed in the culinary art" There are many more examples of happy campers as captured by the camera on horseback (looking even more frightened than the horses), in hiking costume as they file along a mountain trail, on the diving platform participating in aquatic sports, on romantic Eagle Rock dreamily ushering in that lifetime friendship, on the porch of the writing lodge in the throes of composition, and, finally, in front of one of the bungalows

"Beautiful landscaped roads lead to our semi-private bungalows," MR TOBIAS's minnesinger ecstatically chants "Spaciousness and comfort are the keynotes of Kare-Free's comfy cabins You will note that all our bunks are shaded by tall, towering pines, thus assuring cool comfort by day and likewise by night Each bungalow is modern in every respect It has its own private porch and is equipped with complete toilet facilities, including hot and cold running water and shower"

For some inexplicable reason there is no photograph of the interior of any of the bungalows

The first scene of the first act takes place in TEDDY's bungalow

It is a crude structure, slapped together with a lot of storm-beaten planks. It is one of several dozen cabins spattered over the camp grounds, and differs

only slightly from the shack on the men's side this has a closet, lower right, concealed by a curtain. There are four bed-cots squeezed into the room—two on either side. Over the cots are towel racks and over them are several hooks on which are hung shirts, shorts, a deflated automobile tube, etc. There are two cheap dressers with large mirrors attached, several wicker chairs and one or two lamps. A pair of shoes, just whitened, rests on the ledge of one of the two screen windows in the background. A yellow satin evening gown is suspended from one of the hooks (It is Saturday and the girls are expected to be "strictly formal" that night.) A door, left, leads into the bathroom. The door opening into the bungalow is in the dead center of the room and leads to the porch which runs along the side of the shack. Bags are visible under beds, several rackets and golf bags are placed in corners, books and magazines are strewn over dressers, chairs, etc.

TEDDY STERN, still wearing her city clothes, stands framed in the doorway, her back toward the audience. It is a somewhat upset TEDDY we shall soon meet. Won by the captivating phrases of MR TOBIAS's booklet, lured by the blandishments contained in the letters of her girl friend, FAY FROMKIN, TEDDY has come to camp, a lost soul with nobody on hand to meet her. Three of the campers, ROSALIND, LOIS and SOPHIE have taken her in hand and have escorted her to her bunk. TEDDY's open suitcase rests on a cot in the foreground. The three girls—ROSALIND in overalls, a bandanna over her head, SOPHIE in linen culottes, her hair in curlers, and LOIS in a bright red bathing suit, are rummaging through TEDDY's effects. LOIS picks up a bottle of perfume, shakes it and applies the glass stopper to the back of her ear.

LOIS Oh, don't worry. Fay'll be here in a minute.

SOPHIE (finding a new camera and clicking trigger) She must've gone down to meet you at the awfice.

ROSALIND (marveling at TEDDY's set) This toilet set must've cost a pretty coupla dollars. (Sights name on bag handle) Your name's Teddy Stern. (Calling to TEDDY) How come your first name's Teddy? Teddy, that's a fella's name.

TEDDY (shyly, as she turns and comes into room) It's only my nickname, Teddy. It stands for Tessie.

ROSALIND (a trigger mind) Oh, I get it.

LOIS (in alarm, to SOPHIE) Put that down. You'll break it. (To TEDDY) Was it very hot in the city when you left?

TEDDY Not so warm as it was sticky.

SOPHIE Oh, lots of humidity, ha? (ROSALIND has walked toward TEDDY and now stands at her right.)

ROSALIND Oh, there must be a load of humidity in the city. (Suddenly fascinated by TEDDY's printed dress, she fingers the material.) That's very nice material.

TEDDY Thank you. (SOPHIE has unearthed a stenographic notebook and holds it up.)

SOPHIE Look! A note-book!

LOIS (*outraged, and prepared, if necessary, to picket*) You're not going to do any work while you're on your vacation, are you?

TEDDY Oh, no (*Self-consciously*) I thought I'd make some notes for myself—you know, my impressions of camp life. Then some day I'll have something to look back on.

ROSALIND Like a diary, huh? Say, that's a very good idea.

SOPHIE I wonder why we don't think of it.

LOIS (*eyeing her admiringly*) Your friend, Fay, is right. You must have a very good head on your shoulders (*She looks at wrist watch and starts for door*). Come on, if we're going to be there.

SOPHIE (*following her out*) See you in the dining room (*After a quick survey of the room*). Say, this bunk's even bigger than ours.

TEDDY (*aware of the amenities*) Thanks for showing me the way.

ROSALIND Don't worry about Fay, Teddy. She's prollly looking all over camp for you (*Hurries after the others on porch. Their voices can be heard as they trail off*). Dija see that evening gown? It was beautifful.

LOIS That must cost a good ninedy semny-five wholesale (*TEDDY crosses to bed, notices her effects which the girls have thrown into violent disorder, and starts to arrange them. The cloppety-clop of running feet is heard, the door is flung open and the breathless FAY FROMKIN comes rushing in to hurl herself at TEDDY. FAY is the complete*

apotheosis of that snug and self-sufficient borough of New York, the Bronx. Her features, manners, gestures, the sing-song intonation of her voice are unmistakably identified with that struggling horde of workers who, during rush hour, squeeze themselves into the subway trains bearing the red and green lights.)

FAY Teddy, dolling!

TEDDY Hello, Fay.

FAY I din know till just this minute—(*MAC FINKLE appears in the doorway, in tennis costume. He is a pleasant, ineffectual young man who exudes considerable dental charm. He watches the girls in close embrace*.)

TEDDY (*after they part*) Well, I'm glad to see I'm in the right place after all.

FAY I din even know the bus was in yet (*Aware of MAC's presence*). Come on in, Mac. I want you should meet my girl friend, Miss Teddy Stern. I told you so much about (*She places her hand on MAC's neck with a proprietary air*). Teddy, this is Mac Finkle.

TEDDY Hoddeya do?

MAC Pleased to make your acquaint anceship.

FAY You got lipstick where I kissed you (*Erasing it with her handkerchief*). Here, hold still.

MAC You remaining here fa long, Teddy?

FAY (*picks up TEDDY's coat and walks to closet*). Now we'll put your coat in here.

TEDDY I'm supposed to stay for two weeks, but now— (*Dubiously as she looks around room*) Oh, I don't know

FAY (*shocked*) Teddy!

TEDDY (*casting an apathetic eye on the cots*) This isn't at all what I expected, Fay Semi-private bungalows, they said in the little booklet And look, four in a room! (*To MAC*) Why, it's like living at home with my mother and father and my brother, Charlie, and his wife I purposely came here to get away from them

FAY You're gonna love it here Won't she, Mac?

MAC You just gotta get used to it Now you take when I first came—

FAY (*sitting on cot*) Say, what about the argument you had?

MAC Yes, we heard about it Chick told us

TEDDY Who's Chick?

MAC The fella you had the argument with What happened?

TEDDY (*with a dismissive wave of the hand*) Oh, that Well, I'm not feeling so good lately All I want is some peace and quiet

FAY (*anxious to elaborate*) Teddy's had a little trouble with a certain young—

TEDDY (*quickly, before all is disclosed*) That's neither here nor there Well, I was sitting in the bus, thinking over some personal matters, when this young man, this—

FAY Chick Go on

TEDDY He speaks to me, a complete stranger—out of a clear sky! And on and on he goes, about the view and the mountains Finally I had to say to him "Look, I'm not interested in mountains Do you mind, please?" Well, you should've heard his answer!

MAC He saw you was alone and was oney trying to be sociable

TEDDY (*appealing to the widely-traveled FAY*) But at the seashore porters don't act that way Do they, Fay?

FAY Chick's not a porter, he's a waiter

MAC And they're like us They pay for their jobs

FAY They're not like hired help at all

TEDDY (*spurred by a pang of conscience*) Oh, then maybe I shouldn't've been so annoyed (*As MAC moves away to inspect the room*) But waiter or no waiter, he said some very fresh things to me Do you know what he—? (*HENRIETTA BRILL, a stout girl, comes out of bathroom dressed in a slip, skirt, stockings and high-heeled shoes She has on severe-looking glasses which make her seem more formidable than ever HENRIETTA is a sectarian radical who has recently discovered The Cause She is full of political rubber-stamps and platitudes and, like a new convert, makes up for her ignorance by taking a dogmatic stand on all matters She sights MAC, gasps, and takes refuge in the bathroom*)

HENRIETTA Oh!

MAC I better get outta here

FAY I din know Henrietta was in there

MAC (*waving to TEDDY*) Pleased to've made your acquaintanceship (*Significantly to FAY*) See you later

FAY Surely (*He exits She crosses toward center*) It's aw right now, Henrietta He's gone

(HENRIETTA *appears and speaks FAY with a withering glance Her voice is coated with outraged indignation*)

HENRIETTA For heaven's sakes, Fay Fromkin, why don't you inform a person when you have mixed company in the bungalow?

FAY I din even know you were in there Oh, I want you should meet—

HENRIETTA (*without changing her tone*) I had the pleasure already (*Walking toward closet*) Honestly, it's very embarrassing to have people intrude on your privacy, especially when you have nothing on (*She disappears into closet TEDDY sidles up to FAY and speaks in a whisper*)

TEDDY Who is she?

FAY A floor-lady in Newark She's a radical Evveything is with her a speech

TEDDY (*shrugging her shoulders*) Bevond me

FAY Well, waddeya think of Mac?

TEDDY Who?

FAY Mac The boy who was just here (*Parenthetically, as TEDDY holds up slacks and blouse*) You put

them in there I wrote you about him

TEDDY (*on way to bathroom*) Oh, so he's the one (*She pauses, suddenly remembering the rhapsodic passages in FAY's letters to her*) But he doesn't look like Robert Taylor

FAY (*lamely*) Oh, I think so—a little bit

TEDDY Oh, Fay! Is he a college man?

FAY No, he's in business fa himself (*Feigning indifference*) Any-way it's nothing serious He's going back tomorra He's just a nice contact to know in the city doong the winter, that's all

TEDDY (*she has made a quick flight in and out of bathroom*) Now you know you like him, and why shouldn't you if he's a nice boy? (*Pats her gently on the back HENRIETTA comes from closet in time to hear part of the conversation*)

HENRIETTA Parn me for interrupting, but when it comes to the male sex this camp is very inferior You're going to be disillusioned, Betty

TEDDY Teddy

HENRIETTA Teddy They're very common, I regret to say Their conversation is mostly physical, not intellectual

TEDDY (*her eyes traveling from HENRIETTA to FAY*) Really?

HENRIETTA Oh, emphatically! The ad in the Nation says, "A summer camp for adults," but it should be for adults, judging how forward they

are And such audacity you've never seen!

FAY (*moved to salvage the camp's honor*) Far be it from me to contradict you, but I—

HENRIETTA (*diving into her speech*) Parm me for interrupting, but I've been coming here for four years steadily (*With complete finality*) I know whereof I speak (*As TEDDY crosses to bathroom with towel*) Oh, the hot water there doesn't function

TEDDY (*vaguely*) Doesn't it? (*Enters bathroom*)

HENRIETTA (*picks up a brush and pastes her hair*) Even in camp they exploit us You'd think for the price you pay the faucets would at least function

(*Just then a voice is heard coming over the Public Address System The announcer cherishes the fond hope that some day a radio scout will hear and discover him For this reason the local broadcasts are delivered in the sweet, oozy, Crisco-like tones employed by professional announcers*)

P A VOICE Attention, please All boats in

FAY (*as TEDDY comes flying out of bathroom*) That's the announcer

P A VOICE All boats in Thaaank you

FAY Gee, it's nearly lunch time

HENRIETTA (*now fully dressed*) If we presented a united front and demanded better service, we'd get it all right (*Pauses at the door*) But go

activize a bunch of petty bourgeois! (*She exits.*)

TEDDY Who in the world let her loose?

FAY Dija ever!

TEDDY What's the matter with her, anyway?

FAY Sour grapes She believes in free love, but none of the fellas will give her a tumble

TEDDY Aw, the poor girl

FAY It's no wonder Just lookit her form—chunky—a regella Kate Smith

TEDDY (*examining her stained hands*) Look at my hands! (*Returns to bathroom*)

FAY (*removes TEDDY's evening gown from bed and holds it up*) Lookit this! A new evening gown she's got Oh, it's simply stunning—a genu wine knockout! (*There is a knock at the door*) Come! (*CHICK KESSLER enters carrying a new and handsome bag with foreign travel labels pasted conspicuously on it He is young, intelligent, sensitive—but not in the shirt-open-at-the-collar sort of way He wears a gray sweat-shirt with the camp's letters on it—C K F, white duck trousers and black shoes*)

CHICK (*smiles engagingly*) Here's your friend's suitcase (*Places it at foot of TEDDY's cot*) Look Give her some advice for me Tell her to relax (*Starts for door*)

FAY Chick, I gotta bone to pick with you

CHICK Yes? What's the bone?

FAY. D'you think Mr Tobias would like to know you offended one of the guests here?

CHICK Waddeya mean—offended?

FAY You think it's the right spint to pass a remark to my girl friend, 'specially when she's new to this camp?

CHICK (*tolerantly*) You think it's the right spint for her to insult me?

FAY Perhaps she was justified

CHICK Perhaps she wasn't justified I'm not a bellboy, and I'm not fresh, and she shouldn't have provoked me by her attitude

FAY What attitude?

CHICK (*pointing to labels on bag*) Maybe your friend is very rich Maybe she travels a lot with servants who are constantly at her beck and call That doesn't necessarily mean that every person she meets should be treated like a menial

FAY Wait a minute She *borrowed* that bag! Why, Teddy's never been away from home before (*Puzzled*) Say, wadde you talking about?

CHICK (*impatiently*) I made some innocent comment to her about the scenery I didn't give a damn about the scenery She seemed all alone, and I just wanted to be pleasant (*His voice rising as he recalls the scene*) Well, the way she snapped at me you wouldn't even snap at a dog! Where does she get off, this Miss High-and-Mighty—?

(*The bathroom door is flung open and the enraged TEDDY flounces out,*

adjusting slacks into which she has changed)

TEDDY I'll show you where Miss High-and-Mighty gets off when I have you reported Of all the impudent, fresh individuals I ever—

FAY Teddy, dolling, you're oney ag gravating yesself

TEDDY I didn't come to this camp to be insulted

CHICK (*coldly*) Perhaps if you talked a little more civilly and with less temper you—

TEDDY Don't you tell me how to talk For the money I pay I can talk exactly as I please!

CHICK (*with heavy sarcasm*) Oh, I beg your pardon You're a customer here, so naturally you're right You have the privilege of stepping on the help, and the help must meekly submit Why not? You're a paying guest So I beg your pardon Excuse me for living!

FAY (*stepping toward CHICK*) Is that necessary, that sarcasm?

TEDDY I guess that's what you get around here

FAY Honestly, Chick, I'm surprised at you A boy with your brain matter My girl friend is just here

CHICK Wadde you want me to do?

FAY The lease you can do is to apologize to her

TEDDY (*almost crying*) Please, Fav, I don't want any favors

FAY (*sweetly as she sidles up to him*)
Go on, Chick Do like I say

CHICK (*reluctantly to TEDDY*) Look
Maybe I—I said something I should-
n'a said—

TEDDY Huh! I like this maybe!

CHICK All right, I said something I
shouldn'a said Satisfied? So if I
hurt you—

TEDDY (*tearfully*) Don't worry You
didn't have the satisfaction!

CHICK Aw, what's the use! (*He exits,
slamming door*)

TEDDY (*sinks on cot, her back to audi-
ence*) A fine camp you recom-
mended! They certainly have some
very polite people here, I must say!

FAY I'm so supprised at him He's a
very polite fella ordinanly

TEDDY Dope!

FAY (*rushing to CHICK's defense
what's right is right*) Oh, Chick's a
college grad

TEDDY He must've studied how to be
rude I didn't mean to hurt his feel-
ings

FAY (*walking toward her*) Come on
It'll soon be time for lunch

TEDDY (*dully*) You know some-
thing? (*Rising*) I've got halfa mind to
pack up and leave Let them keep
the deposit!

FAY Teddy, what're you talking!

TEDDY Honestly, I mean it (*Her
voice breaking*) With all the troubles
of the past few months—

FAY (*putting arm around her*)
Teddy!

TEDDY Fay, I'm so sick and disgusted
you have no idea

FAY That's foolish, that kinda talk

TEDDY Everything in the world
seems to be happening to me

FAY (*fixes her with a look of re-
proval*) Now who's the gurl who
wasn't gonna say one word about her
engagement? Listen to her! (*Sits on
end of cot*)

TEDDY Oh, I'm not even thinking
about it, and besides I don't wanna
be reminded That's all my family's
been talking about for weeks Oh,
God, it'll be a relief not to have
mama nagging at me "Tessie, you're
gonna be an old maid! Tessie, it's
gonna serve you right!" Tessie this,
and Tessie that, till I could almost
bust

FAY Gee, you'd think Sam Rappa-
port was the oney man left in the
world!

TEDDY (*wearily*) I don't even wanna
talk about it any more

FAY How you could allow a man to
make a nervous wretch outta you is
beyond me

TEDDY Sam's a dead issue in my life
He could drop dead this minute, God
forbid, and I wouldn't care I—I'd
only feel sorry, that's all

FAY I wouldn't waste a single drop
of sympathy on him (*A note of cer-
sure, now that the subject is up*)
If I was in your shoes I wouldn't've

returned the ring either. Why, you never even had it appraised!

REDDY Let's not talk about it. He's past and forgotten.

FAY (*her voice flaked with indignation*) I can't get over the lousy crust of a man! You're formally engaged, with the furniture all picked out—a beautiful bedroom suit—

TEDDY (*testily*) Please, Fay, I told you I don't wish to revive Sam.

FAY Listen, if a person thinks more of setting up their brother in business instead of taking that money and making a nice home for them intended, I say the hell with him!

TEDDY (*getting to her feet*) O K. O K, already! (*Butterfly after a slight pause*) Another whole year he wanted me to wait till he got his investment back. Three years' waiting wasn't enough!

FAY You never really liked him. Old Man of the Mountains!

TEDDY He's only forty-two.

FAY Forty-two! Then let him find somebody his own age. A young girl like you! It's like—like marrying your own father (*Guilty of a social lapse*). Excuse the expression.

TEDDY (*musingly*) My brother, Charlie, is married. My sisters are all married. Mama was so afraid I'd be the only single one. "A man in his forties is just right," she'd say. "He doesn't run around. He's settled already." Sam certainly was settled all right. He wouldn't budge at night. He didn't like concerts, he didn't like dances, he didn't like this, he didn't

like that. Only one thing he liked—the radio. God, how Sam adored the radio! (*Picks up her bag, places it on cot and starts to snap it open*) I tell you it'll feel wonderful to have dinner again without those two extra guests— (*Glances toward FAY*) Amos an' Andy.

FAY (*swinging around to face TEDDY*) Well, I wanted to tell you in the beginning it was a mistake, but I was afraid I'd hurt your feelings.

TEDDY Oh, I guess I was sick and tired of my job and my family. I thought it'd be fun to have my own home. So every summer I took my vacation money and bought dishes and flatware and blankets. What a fool I was! (*Softly as she touches the Paris label on her bag*) I—I thought surely by this time I'd be honeymooning in some place like Paris. My cousin, Sid, told me so much about Paris. "Parree," he calls it. (*Takes comb and brush from bag and crosses*) Well, anyway, here I am—at Camp Kare-Free. My first vacation in three years.

FAY Never mind, Teddy. (*Rising*) A girl with your brains and your personality will have no trouble. He'll be a hundred times better than Sam Rappaport. Wait and see.

TEDDY Oh, Sam's a dead issue with me. (*Fingering a dress hanging on hook*) I don't even wanna discuss it.

FAY (*pointing to dress*) She copied it from Joan Crawford's last pickcha.

TEDDY Who did?

FAY Miriam. She occupies this bed. Mmmm, is she raging mad! Her boy

friend, Pinkie, stood her up on a horseback date

TEDDY Is she here with her boyfriend?

FAY Nah! She met him here at camp, and you should see the way she chases him around. It's a disgrace! (*Suddenly*) Say, there's somebody you'd like—Pinkie Aaronson. He's got two millinery stores and he's young—

MIRIAM'S VOICE (*from offstage, left*) Go on, Reba. I'll meetcha in the dining room.

FAY Speak of the devil, she's sure to appear.
(*The door opens and MIRIAM ROBINS enters. She is pretty, feminine and a complete bird-brain. Her vacation is dedicated to the task of bagging the elusive PINKIE AARONSON. She is in her riding habit, black jodhpurs, green blouse, yellow scarf. Her hair is piled high, giving the curious impression of a nest balanced on her head. During the scene she changes her blouse and scarf.*)

FAY Oh, Miriam, I want you should meet my girl friend, Teddy. Teddy, this is Miriam.

TEDDY Pleased to meet you.

MIRIAM Likewise.

FAY We were just complimenting your evening dress.

MIRIAM It's a Jo-an Crawford copy I designed from her last pitcha. (*Alive with news*) Oh, guess why Pinkie didn't keep the date—Mrs Sklar!

FAY Mrs Sklar!

MIRIAM That married woman. You know, the heavy drinker with the antique jewelry.

FAY She's in the canteen all the time? (*Confidentially, to TEDDY*) Whenever you look at her she's got a glass of Scotch highball in her hand.

MIRIAM She's a married woman.

FAY With the cutest baby—Donald. A little boy.

MIRIAM She occupies a cottage in the married section. She's here for the whole season.

TEDDY Her husband here with her?

FAY Nah! He only comes down week-ends.

MIRIAM But this week-end he had to be detained by business.

FAY (*knowingly*) That's what he said!

MIRIAM So what has she got to do but go after the single boys?

FAY Some of the married women here are so common, you got no idea.

MIRIAM And the boys like the married women. One or two of them are positively wild!

TEDDY (*the smart conversationalist*) If their husbands only knew! (*She goes off to bathroom.*)

MIRIAM (*with a sigh of resignation*) Well, that's what we got to content with here at camp. Trouble enough finding a nice serious type boy without some flighty married woman snatching him away. (*Primping her-*

self at dresser) Of course, if Pinkie wishes to make a spectacle of himself with Mrs Sklar, far be it from me to stand in the way

F A VOICE Attention, please Luncheon is now being served Luncheon is now being served Thank you

TEDDY (*coming from bathroom and smoothing her slacks and blouse*) Maybe we'd better hurry

MIRIAM Take it easy There's plenty of time yet

TEDDY I hope the food is good I'm famished

FAY (*after a careful scrutiny of TEDDY*) What you need is earrings!

TEDDY Not with slacks, Fay

FAY (*goes to dresser and rummages through box*) Here I got an extra pair that'd go good with your blouse

TEDDY But I don't want them, Fay

FAY (*sadly, shaking her head*) You haven't really changed the lease bit Have you, Teddy?

TEDDY Why should I wear earrings when I hate them?

FAY You oughta look your best After all, even in a barrel of rotten apples there's bound to be a good one Who knows, there may be a fella here exactly your type?

TEDDY Look, Fay I came here not because I wanted to, but I didn't know where else to go I thought maybe it would be nice to breathe some fresh air and get a sunburn

The way I feel people don't interest me one little bit (*Kindly, as she looks up from a couple of Modern Library books she has taken from her bag*) I mean with the exception of yourself

FAY Aw right, Miss Crazy It's your life, not mine Hurry up (*Exits to porch*)

TEDDY (*busily engaged in relaying her effects from bag to dresser*) All I wanna do is get away from two things my family and my awface I'm not even going to write any letters so I won't see any envelopes—printed and plain, clasp and open, button and string, cellophane and glassine It'll be wonderful— (*Looks around and notices that she is alone*) Oh, she's gone (*She closes her bag MIRIAM comes out of bathroom brushing her hair She turns, and her attention is immediately captured by the labels on TEDDY's suitcase*)

MIRIAM Are those foreign labels?

TEDDY Yes

MIRIAM Oh, *parly voo Fransay?*

TEDDY No That's my cousin's bag (*Buries it under cot*)

MIRIAM (*admiringly*) Some bag! (*The impatient FAY shouts to TEDDY through screen window*)

FAY Well, Teddy? Howz about it?

TEDDY I'm coming (*Then to MIRIAM*) Well, good-bye for a little while—Miriam (*MIRIAM starts for bathroom carrying a towel*) Oh— (*Points off*) the hot water doesn't function

ACT ONE

SCENE II

The Dining Room The stage represents a corner of a vast dining room. Several tables, set for two, are in the center right of stage. Two large tables, arranged for four, are placed prominently, left. A screened window along the back wall affords a view of the tall pines in the distance. Backed against the rear wall is a long service table which holds bottles of ketchup, condiments, mustard, etc. There is a bandstand, lower right, against which rests another service table. Tacked on the wall above the stand is an ornate banner in purple and gold. It bears the legend, "Camp Kare-Free, 1921" and a design representing a rising sun flanked by two pine trees. Nor is this the only decoration on the walls: there are several homemade murals nailed on the ell going off, left, into the wings. They represent the camp's romantic settings: Eagle Rock, Crystal Lake, Honeymoon Hollow. Two doors, upper right, lead into and out of kitchen. Another door, upper left, takes one on to porch and the grounds.

"A staff of well-trained waiters," the Kare-Free folder brags, "of whom we are forced to boast they are college grads, assist in bringing to our guests the fullest possible enjoyment from each and every dish in the hearty meals we serve." As a matter of fact, two of the waiters we meet have actually gone to college. CHICK, who has his law degree, and BARNEY, the camp Lothario, who is taking a post-graduate course in dentistry. Of the others, several years of intensive training at an evening high school haven't completely erased ELI's accent, nor can SCHMUTZ conceal the fact that his East Side intonation represents an individual triumph over an institution of learning no higher than public school.

At the rise of the curtain CHICK is seated at a table folding napkins. HI, another waiter, is finishing the setting of one of the smaller tables. SCHMUTZ, followed by another waiter, enters from kitchen carrying a large tray containing platters of chopped liver. ELI comes in from door, upper left. All the waiters are dressed in white shirts, black snap bow-ties, white duck trousers and black shoes. ELI walks to CHICK and gives him an envelope.

ELI Janet told me to say good-bye and to give you this

HI It must be your tip

SCHMUTZ Open it (CHICK does so, extracting a single bill which he holds up)

ELI (in disgust) A one-dollar bill!

HI Why din she put it in an eye-dropper instead of an envelope?

ELI That's the thanks you get for waiting on her like a slave, and trotting your feet off at night

CHICK (*handing bill to SCHMUTZ*)
Here, give it to Tobias

SCHMUTZ Don't worry about it,
Chick These disappointed dames al-
ways take it out on us

CHICK At this rate my share of the
tips won't even cover the sixty dol-
lars I paid Tobias for the job

ELI I heard he might give us our
money back at the end of the sea-
son

SCHMUTZ A dreamer!
(BARNEY enters and hangs a poster
on the wall It reads *Basket-Ball,
This Friday Night at the Social Hall
Camp Kare-Free vs Mount Top-
more*)

HI Aha, the Magnificent Obsession!

ELI Guess he's been examining the
new arrivals

HI Well, Casanova, dijja see what
landed?

BARNEY Yeah Not bad

HI Not bad!

SCHMUTZ Dincha see their faces?
At lease with a pretty dame—

BARNEY The pretty dames you can
keep With them you've got to argue
—to debate But with these dogs, you
do 'em a favor when you show some
attention And they're grateful They
come across with tips

ELI (*snorts contemptuously*) Peeew!
One buck!

BARNEY I saw one that came in—not
so bad (*Turns to CHICK*) You took
her valise

CHICK I'll shenk her to you

BARNEY What's the matter?

CHICK Very refined! A little too rich
for my blood I told her off already!

BARNEY You're gonna wind up be-
hind the eight ball with the tips,
Chick

HI And he needs 'em

BARNEY And how he needs 'em!
Schmutz, at least, can go back to his
old man's shop I have my P G
course to take up But with you—
well

CHICK With me there's nothing! Go
on, say it!

SCHMUTZ It pays to have a college
degree! You hadda go and study law
yet!

(ABE TOBIAS'S voice, heard from
kitchen, spurs them into activity HI
and SCHMUTZ exit left BARNEY,
CHICK and ELI busy themselves at the
large table center)

TOBIAS'S VOICE A check fa this, a
check fa that! What'm I made of,
fourteen-karat gold, fa heaven's
sakes?

(TOBIAS enters, followed by CHARLIE,
the headwaiter The former is a
harassed little man obsessed with the
idea he is constantly being taken ad-
vantage of CHARLIE no longer take
his employer's complaints very seri-
ously A moment or two later JOE,
the camp handyman, shuffles out of
kitchen and stands meekly by wait-
ing for attention He is a tired-looking
cadaver, and wears dirty shirt, trou-
sers and hat)

TOBIAS (*examining a handful of
bills*) Try to cut down! Reduce a

little the bills! No! Abe Tobias is paying, so why worry?

CHARLIE But, Abe, the expenses are bound to be heavier—

TOBIAS Why? Answer me, why!

CHARLIE Because we've got twenty-four more guests than last week. Because—

TOBIAS For evveything he's awways got an answer. But awways! (He notices two pattees of butter on plate which he holds up. He glares at CHARLIE.) Such big pieces! Who's the Sandy Clause around here?

CHARLIE Regulation size

TOBIAS (to JOE who has been tugging at his sleeve) What is it, Joe? What's the matter?

JOE I gotta get some supplies fomm the village

TOBIAS (reading paper JOE gives him) What is this—new washers, new plungers?

JOE A coupla terlets ain't workin' on the goils' side

TOBIAS Let 'em wait a few days

JOE But they're raisin' holy hell wit' me. They want the hot water fixed and I—

TOBIAS (waving him away) What're you bothering me with hot water for?

JOE But Mr Tobias—

TOBIAS O K, Joe

CHARLIE (to waiters who have been whispering at table) For God's sakes, fellas, what is this—a coffee klotch? Come on, break it up!

TOBIAS A gold mine you gotta have the way money pours out around here (Excitedly, to waiters) Listen, boys, the next time— (His features break into a smile, several guests have come in) Hoddeya do? (He greets MR and MRS G, who are followed in by HENRIETTA MR G, a retired merchant, is at camp for his wife's health. He has long ago taken possession of her ailments as a subject for discussion, and in any argument concerning medicine, he is the final authority. MRS G is a small, roly-poly, motherly woman who accepts each of her husband's statements as a personal challenge.)

MR G Hoddeya do, Abe? Hoddeya do?
(TOBIAS exits, left CHARLIE enters kitchen.)

HENRIETTA (loading her plate with celery and olives) I certainly could relish a nice piece of fried chicken despite my diet

MR G (counting set-ups at next table) Four places today. So who is the new persin? Must be a girl

MRS G And why is with you a "must be"?

MR G (spreading his napkin before him) Because is all the time more girls in camp than boyess. That's why must be (HENRIETTA has dug into the food before her, after carefully wiping the cutlery and dishes with her napkin. She now lowers fork with a bang and turns to address CHICK who has come on.)

HENRIETTA Chick, would you kindly come here? (As CHICK approaches) I simply must protest

CHICK What's the matter?

HENRIETTA (holding up her plate) You call this chopped liver? (He eyes it apathetically) Just taste this if you wanna taste something disagreeable Go on

CHICK No, thanks What would you like instead?

HENRIETTA Anything but that That isn't liver—it's sabotage! (CHICK hurries into kitchen ROSALIND comes on with BIRDIE, another camper, and they take their chairs at the G's table REBA and TINY enter and go to table at right, center The former's back and arms are burned a lobster-red Throughout scene waters rush in and out of kitchen A cloud of sound soon hangs over the room, a blend of voices, cutlery, dishes and conversation)

ROSALIND Hearty appetite

MR G Denk you

ROSALIND (stretching to reach for the bread) Believe me I'm always glad when it's Sattiday Excuse my boarding-house reach. (She spills salt) Look what I did That means a fight (Throws some salt over her shoulder TEDDY and FAY come in)

FAY . and that's our table there (Pausing near MR G) Folks, I want you should meet my girl friend, Teddy Teddy, the folks

TEDDY. How do you do?

MR G Please to meetchoo

TEDDY (noticing plate before MR G) That looks very good (She goes to table, center, and sits FAY has already taken her place there)

HENRIETTA (through a mouthful of celery) Parm my full mouth, but the food gets more atrocious every meal I just hadda change my liver

MR G (holding a forkful of liver) Meat, meat! Is all the time meat! Too much meat makes high the blood pressure (CHICK has come in from kitchen with a fruit cup which he places before HENRIETTA ROSALIND notices this)

ROSALIND That looks tasty Canya change my forshspice, Chick?

CHICK (to FAY) Shall I change yours, Fay?

FAY Surely

CHICK (to TEDDY) What about you?

HENRIETTA Better change The liver is unbearable

TEDDY (pointing to MRS G who is dumping oysterettes into her glass of tomato juice) I'll have some of that tomahto juice, please

CHICK Tomato juice isn't on the menu, but—

TEDDY (bristling) If it's not, then why has she—?

CHICK (as he leaves for kitchen) But I dare say we can get some for a new guest. (Exits)

FAY Please don't do her any favors! (But he is gone She turns to TEDDY) Ignore him That's the best way.

MR G (*seeing in TEDDY a new customer for his story*) Mrs G gets special the temeteh juice

MRS G (*proudly as she rises*) I'm suffering from diabetes

MR G From a long time awready

MRS G Comes September will be two years

MR G We din even know about it Alluva sudden I see she's losing ten, maybe fiftin pounds

MRS G And a heavy water drinkeh Ten glasses is by me a notting

MR G Alluva sudden! So I say to myself, "Mr G, must be something the metteh with Mrs G —"

MRS G Was like a blood condition And the docteh says—

MR G (*with exasperation*) Let a persin tukk! (*Continuing to others*) So we go to a specialist and he gives Mrs G a blood test, and this kine test, and that kine test—

ROSALIND (*looking off*) The honeymooners! (*All turn as AARON and BESSIE BERLINER enter They are shy and self-conscious*)

AARON Hello, evveybody

MR G Hoddeya do, Mr and Mrs Berliner? How eye you? (*He rises and crosses to TEDDY*)

BESSIE (*as AARON assists her into chair at table down right*) Hearty appetite Enjoy your lunch

MR G Denk you Denk you

AARON Ah, chopt liver! Just what I like

BESSIE Oh, I can make that You just take liver and chop it up

MR G (*to TEDDY in loud whisper*) Lest year he was in the bend a fiddler So she comes to camp and one-two-three they falling in love Now look—honeymooners!

FAY Isn't that romantic, Teddy?

MR G Now they here fa a vacation, and it don't cust them a penny even

TEDDY Don't they pay anything?

HENRIETTA Couples whose romance emerge from this camp get their honeymoon free, gratis and for nothing
(MR G *spears her with a glance and returns to his table*)

ROSALIND It's like an inducement (*Sighs*) But you gotta have luck
(BESSIE *sneezes* AARON, *lost in his food, isn't aware of any contretemps*)

BESSIE (*glaring at him*) Poopsy!

AARON (*uxoriously, through a mouthful*) Hello, you little weasel, you!

BESSIE (*a wounded pigeon*) I just now sneezed

AARON Oh, gesundheit

BESSIE Thank you (*The martyr*) Gee, a person could sneeze a thousand times before getting a gesundheit outta you!

AARON But, baby, I just now said gesundheit

BESSIE. Sure, after I hadda beg you for it (He reaches across table for her hand but she withdraws it petulantly) No, I'm mad (She refutes this by bestowing a smile on him Both return to their food)

AARON You little weasel, you!
(During later part of scene CHICK has come in from kitchen, and MIRIAM from door, left Latter takes her place at TEDDY's table)

CHICK Good afternoon, or rather, good evening

MIRIAM So I'm late fa the appetizer Don't be so sarcastical (Turning to ROSALIND) Rosalind, please pass the celry

ROSALIND (passing plate which has only one piece of celery on it) To take the last piece means you're gonna be an old maid

MIRIAM (tearing off stalk so that one piece is still left) See, I'm leaving some over (Suddenly MIRIAM's attention is arrested by some one she sees offstage She pushes chair back, rises and hurries off) There's Pinkie!

ROSALIND (staring after her) My goodness, lookit her rush!

HENRIETTA No wonder there's no sex equality in camp—with the girls constantly running after the fellas

ROSALIND (excitedly, pointing toward other end of dining room) Look Here comes Itchy, our social director!

FAY (chuckles, and turns to TEDDY) Some wonderful sense a yewma he's got—a little risky, but comical

ROSALIND I consider him much better than Milton Berle
(ITCHY FLEXNER enters followed by his assistant, SAMMY That ITCHY is a comedian is known at once by his costume a bright blazer, bell-bottom sailor trousers and a sailor's hat SAMMY, hiding behind an accordian he carries, wears a pith helmet Both mount the bandstand)

TEDDY That's a very funny get-up

OFFSTAGE VOICES (in a cheer as ITCHY mounts stand) Forty-seven, forty-eight, forty-nine, raaaazberries!

ITCHY Hoddeya like that? The Master of Cemeteries gets the razzberry! (Whips out false beard which he puts on) Comes the revolution I'll get razzberries with crimm! (There is laughter from the diners)

FAY What'd I tell you? Some sense a yewma!

ITCHY (removing beard) Seriously, folks, I wanna extend in the name of Mr Tobias a welcome to the newcomers who are new to this camp To the old-timers I wanna say that Camp Kare-Free's still got the old carefree spint and—well, we wanna get your co-operation to keep the camp spint as such

FAY He talks a very nice grammar

ROSALIND He's got a sister who's a libertarian

ITCHY I wanna tell the newcomers that we are informal at this camp You can dress how you like

SAMMY So long as you wear clothes.

ITCHY Fa my part you can even be a nudist Remember, where there's life,

buoy, there's soap Ong, ong, ong!
(Again there is laughter from the listeners The loudest laugh, however, can be traced to ITCHY he slays himself) But seriously, folks, tonight is dress-up night We want the girls to spruce yesselves up and show the fellas what you really look like I mean with your clothes on

FAY What'd I tell you? He's very risky

HENRIETTA He's coarse—but not offensive

ITCHY (looking around room) And now folks, being as there's lotsa newcomers here today— (FAY's hand shoots up and she points to TEDDY) Ah, there's one— (Consults his list) Fay Fromkin's girl friend, Miss Teddy Stern! (Applause from diners) Stand up, Teddy, and take a bow

FAY Go on, Teddy Stand up

TEDDY (lowering her head in embarrassment) No, no! Lemme alone!

ITCHY Ah, she's a little bashful Looks like Teddy can't bear it Ouch! Well, suppose we give her and the other newcomers here the good old Camp Kare-Free song Now, all together—evveybody sing! Hit it, Sammy!

(A steady procession of waiters come from kitchen carrying trays laden with soup, and exit left above the tables During the song TEDDY can be seen in whispered remonstration with FAY)

ITCHY AND DINERS (to the tune of "Mother")

C is for this camp with pleasures many,

A means active, always on the go,
M is for the meals, and they are plenty,

P is for our plays—a wond'rous show,

K is class, and that's the very highest,

F is fun That means you're never blue

Put them all together that spells Kare-Free

(A cheer)

Kare-Free, rah, rah, rah! Kare-Free, sis, boom bah!

(Again the song)

And sweetest memories for you

(As ITCHY comes to the concluding line of song he pauses to slap REBA across her sunburned back)

REBA Geez!

(ITCHY and SAMMY leave, left, as the diners applaud them CHICK and ELI are on stage serving MR C and others)

FAY Gee whiz, what's the harm in taking a little bow? If it was me—

TEDDY But it's not you, and I'm not going to make an exhibition of myself

HENRIETTA I know precisely how you feel I remember one time—

(MIRIAM returns to her table, unaware of the curious glances fixed on her)

MIRIAM Listen, I gotta sit with Pinkie and hold his hand He's like a baby

HENRIETTA And what's the matter with him?

MIRIAM He's sick That's why he wasn't in a horseback mood

FAY He wasn't too sick to keep a date in the canteen last night

MIRIAM You think I won't tell him about it? He's gonna get a mighty good piece of my mind in the canoe this afternoon *(She walks off up-stage as MAC comes on from down, left)*

MAC Hearty appetite, folks

MR G Denk you Denk you

MAC *(to FAY)* I just came to remind you we got a date fa a canoe-ride later

FAY *(hesitates and directs a glance toward TEDDY)* I don't think I can—

TEDDY Oh, don't worry about me There's lotsa things I wanna do

HENRIETTA If you wish canoe-company, I'm not occupied

TEDDY No, thanks I haven't finished unpacking *(To FAY)* But you two go ahead

FAY No, Mac Some other time

MAC But there's no other time I'm leaving tomorrow

TEDDY Go ahead, Fay—please It's silly to change your plans on my account Fay—please!

FAY O K, Mac See you later *(MAC withdraws For a moment or two there is silence broken only by the diners lost in their soup)*

TEDDY *(idly digging at her food).* Everybody suddenly seems to be going canoe-riding

MR G *(brightening)* Look She don't know why! Iggle Rock, uv cuss!

TEDDY What?

MR G Iggle Rock Sure! The boyess and the girls, they go there in boats In the night-time is the moon shining and they holding hands—

MRS G *(beaming)* And right away—*(Smacks her lips)* monkey business!

MR G Wait! You'll make monkey business, too

TEDDY I beg your pardon *(CHICK comes on with several plates of food which he serves at MR G's table)*

MR G What'sa metteh, a nice girl like you won't find a boy? Don't worry So if not a camper, he's a waiter

TEDDY *(embarrassed, she turns to ROSALIND)* Could we have the bread, please?

ROSALIND Russian rye or plain white?

TEDDY Any kind

MR G *(refusing to drop the subject)* Listen, the waiters, they the best Col litch boyess The finest from the finel *(Takes CHICK's arm)* Lookit Chick. A lawyer Smott like anything!

CHICK O K, Mr. G, O K!

MR G Look, look, how beshful he is

TEDDY I wish this man would stop it

MR G Listen! Maybe I can fix it op so you should be honeymooners next year Ha?

FAY Can'tcha see you're embarrass- ing my girl friend?

MR G But he's such a nice boy, this Chick Aw right, he don't make a good living now, but—

CHICK (*furiously*) You'd do me a great favor, Mr G, if you'd keep that big mouth of yours shut

MRS G Say, hold the tongue, you fresh thing, you!
(CHARLIE *walks on from kitchen*)

MR G Who you tukking to like this? Respect show!

CHICK Please keep your two cents outta my affairs!

CHARLIE What's this? What's going on here?

MRS G A refined boy should insult Mr G Such fresh words he used— like a regelleh tremp

TEDDY (*rising*) I beg your pardon, but with all due respect to this gentleman here— (*Nods toward MR G*) it really wasn't the waiter's fault

CHICK Don't bother about me— please

TEDDY I was only trying to— (*Glares at him and then rushes off*)

FAY Teddy! (*Rises and dashes after TEDDY*)

MR G (*waving finger at CHICK*) Tips I'll give you? You should live so long!

CHICK You can take your tips and—

CHARLIE Shut up, Chick! Just for that you'll be fined fifty cents Hear that?

CHICK Why fifty? Why not make it a dollar?

CHARLIE (*pushing CHICK toward kitchen*) Maybe I will if you don't shut up
(MR G *is tearing a roll into shreds and throwing the pieces into his bowl of soup*)

CHICK Go on, make it five dollars— ten dollars! Who cares?

CHARLIE (*as they exit into kitchen*) Keep it up and I'll report you to Mr Tobias I'm much too lenient around here, and that's no kidding

MRS G (*to her husband who is eating madly*) Some noive from a col- litch boy!

MR G (*lowering spoon with a bang and pushing plate aside*) Ehhh, who can eat now?

CURTAIN

ACT ONE

SCENE III

The Rear Porch of the Social Hall The left of porch is in complete darkness, the right is outlined by the moon's rays which cast a shadow of leaves against the top of the porch The door leading to this balcony is in the dead center of the stage and is decorated with streamers and lanterns

Although informality is the note stressed at camp, Saturday night finds the female guests arrayed in all their sartorial splendor This is the night they seem more exotic than Garbo, more fashionable than Kay Francis They are all glamour girls, all clothes-horses exhibiting the most fashionable in gowns The boys, with the exception of a few rebels, wear flannels and sports coats

At the rise of the curtain the concluding strains of a fox-trot are heard, there is offstage chatter and applause, and a number of couples come from the Social Hall to join their friends hidden in the shadows of the porch There is ad lib conversation from the groups as they come on "We're gonna get some of those green things with ice in them Know what I mean?" "Oh, cromm de mint I had that tonight awready" "Your Gary Cooper is nothing but a string bean Go love a string bean!" "I suppose your Nelson Eddy is better?" "At least my Nelson Eddy can sing" "Has anyone here seen Gertrude?" "She's on the front porch" "Thaaank you"

BARNEY and SOPHIE come out of Social Hall and walk toward rail which runs along front of porch

BARNEY You better go to your bunk and get a blanket

SOPHIE A blanket?

BARNEY Certainey We're going to Eagle Rock

SOPHIE But why do we need a blanket?

BARNEY You wanna catch cold?

SOPHIE (*affectionately as she takes his arm*) Oh, you want me to put it over my back?

BARNEY Sure, dopey—over your back! Don't you know the grass gets kinda wet this time of night? (*They go off, left, as CHICK and SCHMUTZ come on right*)

SCHMUTZ Once a head-waiter, awways a louse! I knew that Charlie would blab to Tobias

CHICK (*wearily*) So what?

SCHMUTZ So you hadda wash windows all afternoon, that's what!

CHICK It was almost worth it May-be Mr G will learn to keep his nose out of other people's business

SCHMUTZ Not Mr G's nose

CHICK I don't mind getting up at five in the morning, or waiting all day on these well-fed nature lovers, or trotting my feet off at night dancing with them That's my job All right But it's not my job to be insulted by them and—

SCHMUTZ They're the ones who give the tips And after all, that's why we're here

CHICK One of the reasons I'm here was to play tennis every day, and swim in the lake every morning That's what Tobias promised us God, I haven't been near that lake in weeks And with four hours' sleep a night I'm just all in (*As music starts*) Well, here we go again—picking flowers off the wall

SCHMUTZ (*stopping him*) You're about ready to fold up like an accordion Give yourself a break, why don'tcha? Stay out here and give your dogs a rest

CHICK How can I? If Tobias sees me it's good-bye job

SCHMUTZ Don't let him see you And if I run into him, I'll cover you up

CHICK (*with a sigh*) I am pretty pooped (*Dreamily studying the sky*) And it certainly is one swell night

SCHMUTZ I'm getting sick of this double life I'm leading—waiter by day, gigolo by night! (*He goes into Social Hall* CHICK crosses to left center, leans over the rail and scans the

sky *The BEBLINERS have come from right*)

BESSIE Jerry says it's O K with him, provided we can dig up a fourth

AARON Ah, that's the problem Whom can we get for a fourth? (*A sudden inspiration*) Sylvia Retnick!

BESSIE Bridge is with her a passion Wait here a minute while I see if she's in there (*She hurries into hall*)

AARON Hurry, sweets (*Looks off and observes CHICK leaning against a pillar*) Hello, Chick

CHICK Hello, Aaron
(*A girl comes on from right, sights CHICK and hurries toward him GUSSIE, one of the "wallflowers," is short, undulating and unprepossessing*)

GUSSIE I thought that was you What's a matter you're not dancing?

CHICK (*affecting limp*) It's my toe It's all swollen

AARON What happened, Chick?

CHICK I must've sprained it or something

AARON You oughta take care of it

CHICK That's exactly what I'm going to do I hope Doc is still up (*He limps off*)

GUSSIE (*eyes AARON for a moment and then speaks*) A good frienda mine suffered something terrible fomm her finger She let a rusty pin get near it and it became infected and, my goodness, she thought she was gonna lose it (*Holding up digit*) It was the pinkie

AARON. With those things it's best to take care of them right away

GUSSIE (*drawing closer*) I never take a chance Let something happen, a scratch even, I simply must put on iodene Or mercurchrome— (*Takes another step toward him*) That's like iodene—oney it's red (*Pauses to listen to music*) That's very nice music, isn't it? (*Looks at him hopefully*)

AARON (*patronizingly*) It's aw right

GUSSIE Kinda makes you wanna dance Doesn't it?

AARON (*shedding the ash of his cigar*) Ah, this band don't compare to last year I was in that one

GUSSIE Is that so?

AARON I did a little fiddle-scratching

GUSSIE Isn't that funny? I noticed you before but I thought you were a newcomer

AARON Nah! I was here fa a whole summer last year

GUSSIE (*now at his side*) Oh, fa goodness sake!

(*BESSIE comes out of Social Hall and walks directly to AARON*)

BESSIE In fifteen minutes— (*Suddenly freezes as she sees another girl at her husband's side, she says*) Suppose we go in and have a dance

GUSSIE (*snatching AARON's arm*) Wait a minute I saw him first

BESSIE (*with icy hauteur*) I beg your pardon, but you did not see him first Aaron Berliner happens to be my husband

GUSSIE Oh, I—I din know Excuse me (*She hurries off*)

AARON What nerve! She comes over to me and—

BESSIE (*returning to the Social Hall*) You must've given her some encouragement—

AARON Poopsy! May I drop dead this minute if I so much as looked at her!

BESSIE (*entering hall, followed by AARON*) Never mind—without fire there's never any smoke!

AARON But Poopsy, I'm standing tight here—

(*HENRIETTA and TEDDY have both come on during this The former wears a flaming-red gown Her billowy bosom is a shelf of cheap jewelry TEDDY, attractively dressed in white, takes a position against the rail*)

HENRIETTA Your Miss Fay is a fine girl friend

TEDDY She's probably out with Mac somewhere

HENRIETTA That's what I mean A real friend wouldn't desert you when you just arrived

TEDDY If I couldn't take care of myself she'd be with me I've known Fay all my life We were in the same class in business school together She even got me my first job—L Gallagher and Company And I met several nice girls there, and lots since But none of them compare with Fay That's why I'm glad if she's with Mac Besides, it's his last night

HENRIETTA His last night! My God, you'd think he was going to be liquidated tomorrow! (*Crosses up and*

stares longingly into hall!) The atmosphere appears fairly lively Perhaps we should partecipe

TEDDY No, thanks I'd rather be out here (*Takes a deep breath*) My, this night air feels marvelous And look at that moon

HENRIETTA (*still staring into Social Hall*) We could obtain a dance from the staff

TEDDY They must have a special moon here in the country It's so—so bright and so big

HENRIETTA They're supposed to oblige us, you know

TEDDY What?

HENRIETTA The staff

TEDDY Oh, I couldn't go up to a stranger and ask him for a dance I just couldn't It would be different if somebody came to me But this way—(*Shakes her head and smiles*) Anyway, I haven't been on a dance floor in so long I wouldn't know how to follow My feet would—(*SCHMUTZ, seeking escape, appears in doorway He sees the girls and quickly retreats but not before HENRIETTA has drawn a bead on him*)

HENRIETTA (*the Northwest Mounted out to get her man*) Parm me, but I'm going in and partake of this dance! (*She goes after SCHMUTZ TEDDY sighs, reaches into her bag for mirror and lipstick and primps herself From the darkened corner muffled voices are heard*)

MAXINE Ouch!

HI What'sa matter?

MAXINE When did you shave last?

HI Before lunch Why?

MAXINE You're scratching me up with your whiskers

HI Aw, baby, I din mean—

MAXINE (*petulantly*) Go 'way My face feels like it's been resting on a pincushion!

(*MIRIAM and PINKIE AARONSON come on from right Latter is a suave, dapper young man in his early thirties There is an unctuous, man-of-the-world quality about his manner It is apparent at once that self-doubt has never tortured him*)

MIRIAM Come on, Pinkie The music will be nearly over

PINKIE Let's go to the canteen I gotta have a drink

MIRIAM After this dance Please, Pinkie

TEDDY (*approaching MIRIAM*) Pardon me, but have you seen Fay by any chance?

MIRIAM No, I haven't

PINKIE (*surveying the newcomer*) Well, bless mah mezzuzah and look who's here!

MIRIAM (*reluctantly*) This is Pinkie Aaronson Pinkie, meet Teddy

PINKIE (*extending hand*) Welcome, young lady And where've you been hiding?

MIRIAM She's my new bunk-mate Well—

PINKIE Not the one with the French label? (*Patting her hand*) Say, we've gotta have a long talk about la belle France

TEDDY Oh, have you been there?

PINKIE Have I been there? (*Laughs and turns to MIRIAM*) Listen to that, will ya?

MIRIAM (*impatiently*) Pinkie, I'm afraid it'll be over before you know it

PINKIE (*as TEDDY withdraws her hand*) You and I are having the next dance, and I'll tell you about what happened to me on the Champs-Elysee—

MIRIAM There is no next dance This is the last one, Pinkie, and it'll be nearly over Come on, awready

PINKIE Don't go 'way I'll be right back after I give schmiggeggie here a work-out (*Enters Social Hall*)

MIRIAM Pay no attention to him (*In furious whisper to PINKIE as she follows him in*) I can't unnastrand what pleasure you get fomm making me feel unnecessary—

(*A group of GIRLS, laughing uproariously, come out of darkness, walk across porch and exit MAXINE, one of the GIRLS, is giggling*)

MAXINE I din even see them in the dark Oh, are my cheeks red!

ROSALIND Lookit Maxine! She's hysterical!

(*TEDDY has strolled to right of porch CHICK comes on from left followed by HI who is accompanied by a GIRL*)

HI Tobias is coming! Better grab yourself a horse (*Pointing to TEDDY*

who is leaning against a pillar) There's one. (*HI and GIRL disappear into room*)

CHICK Good evening (*Awkwardly, as she stiffens*) I—I just wanted to tell you I'm sorry I lost my temper this afternoon I mean that squabble with Mr G At the table, I mean, when you started in to explain to Charlie I'm sorry about it— (*ELI hurries in, notices CHICK, points frantically off-stage and speaks in tense whisper*)

ELI Tobias! (*Exits into hall*)

CHICK (*quickly*) And I just wanted to ask if you have this dance taken.

TEDDY Yes, I have

CHICK (*sunk*) Oh!

TEDDY Besides, I'm not in the habit of dancing with people who are rude in their remarks

CHICK Well, I—I thought if this dance wasn't taken— (*Glances nervously off and starts to withdraw*) Well, thank you just the same

TEDDY (*after a brief struggle with herself*) It—it looks as if this person I'm waiting for is late (*Looks off, left and right*) He seems to be detained somewheres

CHICK You mean, perhaps you wouldn't mind dancing?

TEDDY Well—all right (*TEDDY enters hall and CHICK is about to follow when TOBIAS comes on, accompanied by CHARLIE*)

TOBIAS Just a minute, Kessler I wanna have a serious talk with you

CHICK Can't it wait, Mr. Tobias?
(TEDDY *appears in doorway*) I have
this dance with one of the guests

TOBIAS (*forcing a broad grin to his
face*) Oh Oh, certaineey I din know
(TEDDY and CHICK *withdraw*)
What're you bothering me with Kess-
ler? He's dancing

CHARLIE Sure Now he's showing
co-operation But where was he the
resta the night? No place! (*They
cross porch and almost collide with
ITCHY who has REBA in tow*)

ITCHY Hey, stupid, watch— (*Apolo-
getically*) Oh, Mr Tobias I din
know it was you Excuse me

TOBIAS I've been looking fa you,
Itchy A new show you're supposed
to put on each week That show to-
night was simply terrible

ITCHY Terrible?

TOBIAS Two repeats you served up
tonight The whole camp was com-
plaining they seen them before

ITCHY I had two new numbers set
but you wouldn't get me the cos-
tooms You said—

TOBIAS Hear that, Charlie? Evvey-
thing is my fault—but evveything!
(Turning to ITCHY) And that num-
ber tonight with the radio—was that
a piece of cheese! Feh!

ITCHY (*to REBA, stung to the quick*)
Phil Baker's whole routine! I copied
it word fa word

TOBIAS Excuse the expression, Itchy,
but it— (*Catching himself*) it's no
good "Hello, Beetle" and "Hello,
Bottle" You can't copy something
better?

ITCHY. Yeah, what?

TOBIAS Me he's asking! I'm the so-
cial director here?

ITCHY What about giving that Japa-
nese fiesta?

TOBIAS Again that fiesta!

ITCHY Why not try it? Look We fix
up the canoes with Japanese lanterns
Then evveybody gets into Japanese
costooms—the girls with fans and the
fellas with—well, in Japanese cos-
tooms It won't cost much, and it's a
big novelty

TOBIAS (*again appealing to CHAR-
LIE*) You hear? He spends my money
and that's with him a novelty Lis-
ten, Itchy, forget this foreign stuff,
this Japanese canoeing, and think of
something good That would be a
novelty (*Laughs and exits followed
by CHARLIE* ITCHY, *his arm around
REBA's waist, looks off at TOBIAS's re-
treating figure*)

ITCHY (*his hand traveling along
REBA's side*) He's such a darling! I
rack my brain copying down material
and he says it—

REBA (*yanking his hand away*)
Itchy! Take away the hand!

ITCHY I just wanted to see if you
carry a gun, that's all

REBA Well, I don't, so there! (*The
orchestra swings from a fox-trot to
"Good Night, Ladies"*) It's the last
dance Come on (*There is a flurry of
activity as couples disentangle them-
selves and follow ITCHY and REBA in
From right, clusters of GIRLS come
scurrying to dance with each other
MAC and FAY come out of darkened
corner*)

FAY Let's dance out here It's more romantic (MAC puts her coat on rail and takes her in his arms They dance slowly and gracefully)

MAC Gee, tomorra back to the same old grind

FAY Then you'll forget all about me Outta sight, outta mind

MAC This winter you'll be throwing me outta your house at lease twice a week (Pressing her closer) You're such a dolling (He stops to kiss her They part and he reaches for her coat)

FAY No, Mac No

MAC (surprised) Why not?

FAY My girl friend, Teddy, is here

MAC Say, she's probably on Eagle Rock this very minute

FAY Oh, no—not Teddy

MAC Dija tell her about us?

FAY Mac!

MAC I dunno I thought maybe girls, you know—they talk

FAY Surely they talk But I could never tell things to Teddy About myself, I mean She's from another world altogether

MAC My farewell to camp! (As she hesitates) Say, what is she, anyway? Your mother or something?

FAY But suppose she asts me where I been the whole evening?

MAC Say you've been with me Tell her you hadda say good-bye because—well, after all, it is my last night!

FAY (taking his arm and exiting left). Gee, Mac, you're awways so ultra-practical!

(The music stops, there is laughter and applause, and the CAMPERS file out of the hall The porch becomes a scene of much activity and animation Farewells are exchanged, GIRLS are propelled in the direction of Eagle Rock and there are ad lib fragments of chatter exchanged)

ROSALIND So I says to Itchy, "With your sense a yewma you oughta be on the stage" He's much better than Al Jolson

BIRDIE Well, who ain't?

LOIS So why should I go mountain climbing? My God, don't I climb enough stairs?

KITTY Of all the places fa me to have a sunburn Mama will kill me when she finds out

HENRIETTA How about a little drink, Eli?

ELI Aw right, I'll let you buy me a double Scotch

TEDDY and CHICK are the last to appear They smile shyly at each other CHICK becomes aware he is holding her purse and returns it)

CHICK Would you like some refreshment?

TEDDY No, thanks ever so much I'll just enjoy the view for a minute and then I think I'll retire—to bed (At the railing, looking off) Very pretty, the mountains

CHICK Yes, they are Cigarette?

TEDDY Thank you (As he lights it for her) Again thank you Don't you indulge?

CHICK (*whipping pipe from pocket*)
Pipe! You're a very graceful dancer

TEDDY Considering it's a camp, it's
a very nice orchestra
(GUSSIE crosses porch, sees CHICK
and approaches)

GUSSIE Funny how remockable you
recovered from your sore foot! (*Hav-
ing delivered this thrust she stalks
off*)

TEDDY What in the world provoked
that?

CHICK I didn't wish to dance with
her so I invented an excuse I believe
she's annoyed

TEDDY I'm beginning to understand
what your job is like You must get
pretty aggravated with people like
us

CHICK Surely you're not placing
yourself in the same category with
her

TEDDY You must think so judging
from my outburst this morning

CHICK Suppose we forget about to-
day It was just a misunderstanding

TEDDY (*looks over rail as voices are
heard in the distance*) What's that?

CHICK (*embarrassed*) That—that's
Eagle Rock (*The porch light is ex-
tinguished*) They turn it out at mid-
night

TEDDY (*overwhelmed by Nature*)
One feels so little in all this vastness.
But I suppose you're used to it

CHICK Oh, sure But then all enjoy-
ment is relative

TEDDY And pray, what do you mean
by relative?

CHICK (*the pipe-puffing philoso-
pher*) Well, take anything Take a
one-dollar bill To some one poor a
dollar represents a fortune To a rich
person—poof—a mere nothing

TEDDY I'm afraid I don't quite com-
prehend the connection

CHICK (*indicating the moon*) Well,
pardon me for pointing, but take the
moon for instance

TEDDY Yes?

CHICK To us that moon is beautiful
Right?

TEDDY It's exquisite

CHICK So bright, so luminous Ob-
serve how it lights up that tree over
there

TEDDY Oh, yes (*About to point but
checks the impulse*) Is—is that a
chestnut tree?

CHICK No, those are all pines And
that's the tallest in the Berkshires

TEDDY "Poems are made by fools
like me, but only God can make a
tree" (*Turns to CHICK*) Are you fa-
miliar with—? (*PINKIE comes on
from right and goes to TEDDY*)

PINKIE I bet you thought I'd forgot-
ten— (*Observes CHICK*) Excuse me
I mighta known you'd be snapped
up Well, back I go to little Miss
Screwball (*Exit*)

TEDDY Good night (*Giving her at-
tention to CHICK*) Excuse the inter-
ruption

CHICK That's quite all right (*The mood isn't broken the rail is still the rail of the "Normandie"*) Now look across the lake It's so still and tranquil

TEDDY Indeed it is

CHICK Now the moon there shows us how beautiful nature is And that's where my point comes in Somewhere in a wretched hovel some poor, penniless man is tossing in bed because this very same moon is shining in his eyes He cannot sleep Let us say he has no window blinds So he looks around, and what does he see? His hovel, squalid and bare "Ah," he thinks, "why do I have to be reminded at night of what I cannot help seeing all day?" In other words, this moon which reveals to us how beautiful *our* world is, reveals to this poor individual how wretched *his* world is

TEDDY (*her face aglow with understanding*) At last I comprehend

what you mean! Now take me, for instance It so happens that all my life I've desired to go to Paris I've wanted to see the Eiffel Tower and the Arc de—you know, where the unknown soldier is buried, and the Champ Elysee—I guess that's how you call it And yet you take a Frenchman He is so sick of the Eiffel Tower, he's probably dying to come to this country and see the skyline and the Empire State Building Correct?

CHICK (*amazed at her perception*) That's exactly what I mean! Everything is relative— (*Diffidently*) I'm sorry, but I didn't get your name

TEDDY Teddy Teddy Stern

CHICK (*extending his hand*) My name is Chick Kessler I'm very pleased to meet you

TEDDY (*with conviction*) The feeling is mutual, I'm sure! (*They shake hands*)

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE I

Eagle Rock, six days later A huge boulder jutting from the right, an elevated sweep of greensward carpeted with pine needles, a birch tree gleaming in the sun, hint of the beauty and charm of romantic Eagle Rock

TEDDY and CHICK have known each other now for almost a week In sharp contrast to the cold and hostile attitude which marked their first meeting, they are now on warm and friendly terms They have found many things in common, particularly a feeling of intellectual superiority over many of the other campers

TEDDY is seated on a canoe cushion and is making a queue by sewing two pieces of black cloth to the top of a silk stocking. She is attractively costumed in blue overalls, a satin cut-out top, blue bandanna and sandals. The freshly-shaven CHICK wears a black crew-neck sweater, flannel trousers and sports shoes. He is lying on the ground and is gazing off in rapt admiration of the scenery.

CHICK Gosh, it—it's beautiful! Every day Eagle Rock becomes more and more enchanting.

TEDDY "This is the forest primeval, the murmuring pines and the hemlocks" (*Looking up*) Poetry.

CHICK I know that "Evangeline."

TEDDY Oh, that Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. I'll never forget the long white beard he had on.

CHICK Where did you see him?

TEDDY Just his picture. It used to hang over the blackboard in our class. "Exhale," I called it.

CHICK (*laughs*) You called the picture, "Exhale"?

TEDDY No, the whiskers. Whenever we had deep-breathing exercises I had to breathe in— (*Illustrates by inhaling and bringing her head back*) and every time my eyes came to the whiskers, it was time to exhale. That's why I called the whiskers "Exhale."

CHICK Crazy kid.

TEDDY Oh, I was just a child in those days. (*She puts silk top over his head. He squirms*) Hoddeya expect me to fix this when you twist and turn so much?

CHICK (*looking at queue*) Hey, this is going to be a Japanese fiesta,

isn't it? Y'know, strictly speaking the Japanese don't wear queues.

TEDDY Since when?

CHICK Since never!

TEDDY Listen, tonight they'll wear queues! (*Takes mirror from hand-bag and holds it up*) Here, Chickie, look. Your own mother wouldn't recognize you.

CHICK I hope not. What're you wearing?

TEDDY All the girls will be wearing kimonos so I thought I'd have on pajamas. (*Suddenly*) They wear pajamas, don't they? (*CHICK sits up, looks at her, smiles and leans over to peck her on cheek*)

TEDDY (*without any emotion*) And pray, what brought on this sudden outburst of osculation?

CHICK (*affectionately*) You're so cute, I couldn't resist. What's the matter? You disapprove?

TEDDY And perhaps I do.

CHICK Very well, so I return the kiss. (*Does so*)

TEDDY (*placing queue in bag and removing bottle of lotion*) A nut. What can I do with him?

CHICK Y'know, Teddy, the more I see of you the more goofy I get Right now I'm overwhelmed with goofiness

TEDDY You make me feel like some disease Six days with me and you're overwhelmed with goofiness

CHICK Oh, I know you only six days, do I? Well, apparently you're unaware that time in the country is different from time in the city

TEDDY (*spreading lotion on legs*) Ah, ha! We have Professor Einstein with us today

CHICK I mean it I figured it out after I left you last night

TEDDY This morning, you mean

CHICK (*rising*) Supposing a fella was seeing you in the city Regularly, I mean Let's say two or three times a week

TEDDY Go on

CHICK Of those two-three times a week he spends, let's say, four hours a night But— (*Holding up finger, significantly*) but he doesn't spend those four hours solidly with you I mean, you take in a lecture here, a movie there—you know So of the four hours, he spends two solid hours with you Now two hours times two nights a week, that's four solid hours you're in each other's company Follow me?

TEDDY Proceed

CHICK Let's multiply four hours a week by four weeks a month and we have sixteen hours a month he sees you Suppose, merely for the sake of

argument, it's a close relationship Say six months Right?

TEDDY (*modestly lowering her eyes*) Continue

CHICK Sixteen times six months—six, three to carry— Ninety-six hours you've known each other to warrant a steady relationship

TEDDY So what's the point?

CHICK Simply this Up to and including today I've been seeing you for breakfast, lunch and supper I've been with you till two-three o'clock in the morning Correct?

TEDDY Granted

CHICK That's fifteen hours a day we've been seeing each other really solidly Multiply that by six and that's—that's ninety hours!

TEDDY Proving?

CHICK Proving a very significant fact Namely, that we've known each other the approximate equivalent of six months in the city Six months! (*Sitting beside her*) Think of it, Teddy!

TEDDY You missed your vocation You should've been an accountant, not a lawyer

CHICK. My God, Teddy, I know you thoroughly!

TEDDY. Yes? And what conclusions have you formed?

CHICK Tons of conclusions, believe me Tons of 'em!

TEDDY (*consumed with curiosity*)
That's no answer Enumerate, why
don't you?

CHICK Well, for one thing, you're
different from the average girl
around here

TEDDY That's a wonderful compli-
ment—comparing me with hill-billies
from the Bronx!

CHICK I mean, well, I'll be very frank
with you, Teddy When we had that
little squabble the first day I thought
you were like the others That's why
I was so frigid to you

TEDDY Frigid! An icebox couldn't've
been more frigid than the way you
were!

CHICK I just didn't know you—how
sweet you are and what fun it is to be
with you It's seldom you find a girl
who is charming and bright at the
same time

TEDDY Oh, I'm not bright, Chick
Really, I'm not

CHICK Yes? Well, I consider you
very intelligent

TEDDY My mind is—is passable,
that's all (*In a sudden burst of con-
fidence*) Chick, I'll tell you some-
thing I wouldn't tell any one else I
even hate to admit it to myself I'm
a bluff, and what's more, I know it
(*As he starts to speak*) Now, wait
I like to use big words so people will
think I'm a college grad I try to give
the impression I'm brainy, but when
it comes down to it I'm just like the
other girls around here (*Quickly*)
Maybe on a little higher mental plane
or something, but that's about all

CHICK Listen to Miss Inferiority
Complex! You think I'd waste my
time on you if I thought you were a
dope?

TEDDY Now wait a minute I didn't
say my mind was bad But I ought
to develop it, you know—with lec-
tures and courses at night But all day
long I'm busy typing Mr Faber's
dictation, all day long Comes night
time I'm a total wreck, too tired to
go any place, except a movie occa-
sionally

CHICK We're going places this win-
ter—museums and concerts and ex-
hibitions I've been waiting to find
the right person to take

TEDDY (*reminiscently*) My brother,
Charlie, used to take me to the Sta-
dium concerts, before he was mar-
ried The music was over my head,
but it was nice to sit there, out in the
open, with all those intelligent peo-
ple You go to concerts all the time,
don't you?

CHICK Pretty often (*Smiles*) To tell
you the truth, Teddy, some of the
music's over my head, too

TEDDY I wish I didn't have to work
There's so much I could do if I had
the time—books I wanna read, places
I'd like to go to

CHICK Poor, sweet Teddy You got
such a raw deal from life!

TEDDY I certainly did! (*Suddenly,
puzzled*) Hoddeya mean that, Chick?

CHICK I'm thinking of what you told
me about your erstwhile engagement
to this fella—this Sam what's-his-
name

TEDDY Sam Rappaport

CHICK. For three whole years you've been waiting to throw up your job. You've been laying out your life like you lay out a table for supper—everything neat and orderly. Then alluva sudden—bang! The table is pushed over. The engagement broken. Good-bye to marnage!

TEDDY (*quietly*) I believe in things being all for the best.

CHICK. The nicest years of your life, torn up like a piece of paper. I know what that means, Teddy. The same happened to me.

TEDDY. You were formally engaged?

CHICK. I'm talking about the years I tore up studying law, clerking for buttons before I could take my bar exams. And for what? So I could be a stinking, lousy failure!

TEDDY. I'm surprised to hear you talk that way.

CHICK (*bitterly*). Why not? What's ahead for me, Teddy? Maybe you know the answer.

TEDDY. But you're not the only one in that position—

CHICK. Isn't that peachy? My hand is chopped off and I'm bleeding, so you tell me about somebody whose foot is chopped off. That's gonna relieve my bleeding, huh?

TEDDY. No, but you must realize—

CHICK. I realize plenty—plenty, believe me! (*Desperately*) God, if it's gonna to be the same as last year, I—Oh, I dunno.

TEDDY. I've never seen you in such a morbid mood.

CHICK (*reminiscently*). Gee, I remember when I was a kid I had the world by the tail. I used to see rich men in their automobiles and I'd say to myself, "Don't worry, Chick. Some day you'll have a boat like that—only better. With your full name on the side, not just your initials." Or else I'd read about some famous man and I'd say, "O K O K, Chick. There's no hurry. Shh! Just take it easy. You'll get there and you'll be even more famous." (*Smiles ruefully*). Funny, when you're a kid nothing seems impossible.

TEDDY. I wanted to grow up to be a letter-carrier's wife. (*Laughs*) Of all things!

CHICK. Y'know, even after I was admitted to the bar I still thought I was a big shot. I was a professional man, see? I had a sheepskin with my name on it in fancy letters—Charles Kessler, LL B. The world was waiting for me! (*Snorts*) Sure it was!

TEDDY. Seems to me I'm detecting a little sarcasm.

CHICK. Sarcasm is right! It was waiting—with a club in each hand.

TEDDY (*as lotion runs down her arm*). Hand me that towel, please.

CHICK. So now I have an education and a degree, and what the hell good is it? I can't even get a job as relief investigator at twenty-five smackers a week. There're too many other lawyers ahead of me. (*TEDDY sits up, hands bottle to CHICK and turns so that her back is toward him*)

TEDDY. Rub some of this on my back, Chickie.

CHICK (*applying it ever so gently*). It's all a lotta baloney, Teddy. Study hard, they tell you. Get a lotta knowledge—knowledge is power. A lotta bunk is what I say!

TEDDY That's enough, thank you.

CHICK There's something rotten about the whole set-up. We're licked. We're up against a brick wall, all of us.

TEDDY Well, I still have my job, thank goodness—

CHICK And you hate it worse than poison! For three years you've been dreaming of giving it up, of having a home—your own home that you and Sam, what's-his-name, were gonna share. Where is it?

TEDDY (*turning her head away*) It's none of your business.

CHICK You haven't got it. His brother was licked, so in the neck you got it.

TEDDY Please! I don't wanna hear—

CHICK I know you thoroughly, Teddy. You want a decent home, a husband and some kids. But husbands don't grow on trees these days. What're you gonna do while you're waiting?

TEDDY I'll—I'll wait, that's all.

CHICK (*getting to his feet*) God, if things only weren't so bitched up. (*Quickly*) Excuse me.

TEDDY Wadde you mean by that remark?

CHICK Once in a blue moon I meet a girl who hits me so hard she leaves

me winded. I start doing some serious thinking about how I'd like to settle down. But how can I—without a job and no prospects? And look at you.

TEDDY What about me?

CHICK You've got a job, and how you despise it! You can't quit and settle down till somebody comes along who's ready to make things comfortable for you. Correct?

TEDDY (*sadly*) Correct.

CHICK It looks as if we're just a couple of shmooks.

TEDDY (*pushing canoe cushions back and rising*) Yes, it certainly looks that way. (*There is a thoughtful silence. CHICK directs his gaze toward TEDDY who seems deeply troubled. She looks up and notices his fixed stare. Suddenly his features break into a smile.*)

CHICK (*walking toward her*) Come here, funny face. (*He draws her close to him and they embrace. After a long kiss they part and she studies his face.*)

TEDDY I like you, Mr. Kessler.

CHICK Mr. Kessler is my father. Just call me Chick.

TEDDY I like you, Chick.

CHICK Yeah?

TEDDY Yeah.

CHICK Why?

TEDDY (*coquettishly*). "Y" is a crooked letter.

CHICK. Go on. Tell me why you like me.

TEDDY (*flippantly*) Oh, 'cause you're such a clean-cut boy, I guess, with a very cute face, and you're so—well, you're a clean-cut college man.

CHICK That's not much of a reason

TEDDY I'll tell you, Chick All my life I've been wanting to meet some one with nice, refined instincts, some one whose mind I could respect—a person aware of other things in life besides business and the radio That's all Sam Rappaport could ever talk about (*Shaking her head*) The difference between you two fellas!

CHICK (*after a pause*) Teddy?

TEDDY What?

CHICK We're both in a spot It's not my fault I can't get a job, and it's not your fault that you can't have your own home

TEDDY I suppose you're right

CHICK While we're both marking time these next few years, maybe we can help each other

TEDDY How?

CHICK By admitting that we're two normal human beings and grabbing some fun out of life Then we can say to the world, "We fooled you! We're not hooked! Look—we're laughing!"

TEDDY You still didn't say how

CHICK You like me—you just said so. And you know how I feel about you

TEDDY. I know, Chick

CHICK. Well, since we can't get married, why don't we— (*They exchange glances There is a moment or two of silence before she grasps the import*)

TEDDY (*shocked*) Chick!

CHICK Why should we let life deny us everything? It isn't right! We're entitled to some happiness My God, we're still young!

TEDDY No, Chick

CHICK Why not?

TEDDY It's obvious why not

CHICK I must be blind I don't see it

TEDDY Don't spoil everything Please, Chick

CHICK You're evading the issue. I'm still asking why not?

TEDDY 'Cause I simply can't You don't know what my family would—

CHICK What has your family to do with—?

TEDDY I can't I just can't Even though this might be the real thing, I—

CHICK Might be? Teddy, do you think I'd talk to any one else the way I talk to you?

TEDDY I know that, Chick

CHICK. I don't I assure you I don't Somehow you struck me right between the eyes with a terrific bang Boy, I see a million stars, every one with your face on it And all I can say is if things were only different—

TEDDY If! If! But they're not!

CHICK I know they're not I know I can't earn a living and I've no right to ask you to starve with me But this other hunger—that's something where you can help me Where I can help you That's something the two of us can share

TEDDY No, Chick! No!

CHICK (*shouting*) Why not, for God's sake?

TEDDY (*tearfully*) I'll thank you not to shout at me!

CHICK I—I'm sorry Excuse me (*Calmly*) Why not, Teddy?

TEDDY Honestly, Chick, I can't understand a sweet and clean-cut boy like you asking me to behave like some cheap, ordinary thing—

CHICK Cheap, ordinary thing You call—? (*Eyes her coldly*) Come on Let's get out of here

TEDDY Look, Chick A girl isn't at all like a fella She's got her family to think of— (*Righteously*) This would be a fine world if every girl—

CHICK Shut up! Shut up, you damn fool! (*He rushes off TEDDY watches him, stunned She picks up her sewing bag and walks slowly down the hill*)

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE II

TEDDY'S bungalow, 1130 that night

At rise of the curtain the door opens and FAY enters carrying several Japanese lanterns which she hangs up on the hooks She is dressed in pajamas, and has a bright red sash around her waist Her hair is parted, and flowers placed over each ear represent the final Oriental filip SCHMUTZ, also attired in what he hopes is a Japanese costume, follows her in carrying a basket of supplies He quickly disappears and returns with several boxes which he arranges He then throws a tablecloth over this improvised bar ELI, appropriately attired, enters carrying a bench which he places down right

ELI Make it snappy, kiddies I gotta heavy date

FAY Who was that girl, Eli?

ELI I just met her I made a big hit with my Japanese costume She

wants me to handle her laundry (*There is a great deal of busile and activity on the part of the trio as they arrange the room, pushing chairs and cots aside to make a clearing in the center*)

FAY It certainey was some fiesta We all looked like regella Chunks, huh? I coulda closed my eyes and imagined I was right back in Japan

SCHMUTZ During the rainy season

FAY Too bad the weather came along and drizzled up evveything

ELI What became of Teddy tonight? She wasn't at our table fa supper

FAY She proolly sat somewhere else fa a change I guess she was in Chick's canoe doong the fiesta

SCHMUTZ I was in Chick's canoe And we had a stowaway—Gussie

FAY Teddy wasn't with Chick?

SCHMUTZ Not unless she came dressed as Gussie
(*The boys have finished arranging the bar and now head for the door*)

ELI Anything else?

FAY No, thanks very much
(*They exit to porch, left, as TEDDY comes on from right*)

SCHMUTZ Here she is

FAY And about time
(*TEDDY comes in dressed in the same costume she wore on Eagle Rock She looks off at the boys and laughs*)

TEDDY Those are very funny costumes (*To FAY*) How was the fiesta?

FAY Fine

TEDDY (*surveying the rearranged room*) Say, what's been going on here?

FAY We're gonna have a party

TEDDY Who is?

FAY The whole gang Itchy heard it was my last night, so he's giving me a blow-out (*Sternly*) Teddy, I wanna have a serious talk with you

TEDDY Huh?

FAY Where were you fa suppa?

TEDDY Why, I—I had it at our table.

FAY When?

TEDDY (*without conviction*) After you left Then I went back to the writing lodge and finished reading a novel I started this morning That's why I was late for supper

FAY There's something wrong, Teddy Go on—tell me
(*TEDDY is about to confide in her but hesitates, feeling that the subject is much too personal for discussion She decides to dodge the issue*)

TEDDY I'm worried about Mama I wonder whether I oughtn't to leave with you tomorrow

FAY (*seeing through her*) You do!

TEDDY She hasn't been feeling any too well lately—

FAY Listen, Teddy I'm no dope I still can add two and two

TEDDY Of course you can

FAY (*hurt*) Aw right, you don't hafta tell me (*Suddenly*) Did—did Chick try to get a little personal?

TEDDY What makes you say that?

FAY So that's it! (*Laughs*) My God, I thought it was something serious! (*MAXINE opens door, deposits a large bag of food on the floor, speaks excitedly and vanishes*)

MAXINE Corn-beef, American cheese, cream cheese, franks! I gotta get pickles Good-bye!

FAY (*mechanically*) Good-bye (*TEDDY goes to bag, takes out sandwich, looks at it, and, aware that FAY is watching her, puts it back*)

FAY Why don'tcha go ahead? You know you've had no suppa

TEDDY Oh, I ate very heartily

FAY And you've had no fight with Chick Listen, Teddy, you might as well know he's coming to the party with Gussie

TEDDY (*with forced gayety*) The more the merrier! (*She crosses to get her pajamas hanging from hook*)

FAY I see So you're gonna act like Pagliacci

TEDDY (*heading for bathroom with pajamas*) Fay, that mind of yours imagines more things! After three years I'm here for a good time And that's what I'm certainly having! (*Enters bathroom*)

MIRIAM'S VOICE Quick, somebody—open up the door! (*FAY rushes to door and opens it to admit MIRIAM who is laden with a portable victrola and a batch of records She wears a topcoat over her pajamas*)

FAY Look who's here—Mrs Sandy Clause!

MIRIAM Take those records off before I bust

(*FAY removes records and clears a place on cot for the victrola.*)

TEDDY'S VOICE Hello, Miriam

MIRIAM Hello (*Turning to FAY*) I got a lend of the machine fomm Pinkie What I din hafta go through to get it!

FAY Is—is Pinkie coming?

MIRIAM Nachelly he's coming—if he can stop guzzling at the canteen I wish Mr Tobias would padlock that saloon

TEDDY'S VOICE Is it still wet outside?

MIRIAM Yeah, it's drizzling the weather (*To FAY*) Oh, I ran into Hennesetta, and guess what?

FAY What?

MIRIAM She's not coming She's got a date

TEDDY'S VOICE Our Hennesetta? You know, I'm kinda glad

MIRIAM Can you imagine!

FAY I bet she's out galvanating with some radical The two of them must be talking of blowing up places with bombs You know how it is when them communists get together

MIRIAM (*prophetically*) Some day those people are gonna get arrested (*She has doffed her coat and now comes forward prouetting in the manner of a mannikin*) Hoddeya like these? They're genuwine Japanese pajamas Very chop-suey, ha?

FAY They new?

MIRIAM Eh, heh

FAY Wear them in good health

MIRIAM Thank you The exact same thing retails at Hearn's fa four ninety-eight, not counting that god-damn tax (*Anxiously as she holds out pajama pants and turns her back*) Can you see the foundation garment I got on?

FAY Nah You can't see a thing

MIRIAM You feel so untidy when you can see through (*Crossing over to bar*) Well, we'd better get ready (*TEDDY comes out of bathroom dressed in pajamas She wears a garland of flowers in her hair, and a sash around her waist She minces across stage, her hands raised in Japanese fashion*)

FAY Don't you look like Miss Anna May Wong!

TEDDY Now what I need is earrings

FAY Sure, help yesself (*MIRIAM has started to open a jar of olives with a carving knife, and has quite a time of it*)

MIRIAM Gee, I'm worried about that Pinkie You got no idear how the girls keep pestering him and pestering him They all hadda hear about his stores (*Walks toward TEDDY*) He's got two big hat stores, and is that a business! Evvy winter he goes to Europe To Paris, France

TEDDY Does he really go abroad?

MIRIAM Of course—fa the new styles (*Sighs*) Believe me, I'd like

to go to Europe Of course, I don't know the langwiah—

TEDDY I thought he was joking the first night, talking about Paris

MIRIAM Oh, no! Evvy winter—reg-ella like clock-work, off he goes to Paris, France His suitcases are covered with labels galore— (*She prods jar with knife and comes dangerously near decapitating herself*) like the one you got

FAY (*taking knife from her*) Gimme that knife Wanna kill yesself?

ITCHY'S VOICE Open up in the name a the law!

FAY It's Itchy! (*She dashes forward and opens door ITCHY and REBA enter and deposit gin bottles and mixings at the bar ITCHY wears a pigtail, drooping mustache, and his eyes are made up in Oriental fashion A brightly-colored robe covers his costume His headgear consists of an electric plate, the cable serving as a pigtail He shuffles to TEDDY and genuflects*)

ITCHY Hoy chung a fong foo moy yung Honable ladies, me belly happy meeting you Me name? (*Coughing violently*) One Lung Gone! Get it?

FAY Meshugeh!

MIRIAM Look at Charlie Chan at Camp Kare-Free!

ITCHY (*placing gin bottle on his head*) Me putee firewater on toupee Know why? To keepee wig-warm Ong, ong, ong (*This is met with an appreciative roar ITCHY takes his place behind the bar and starts to prepare cocktails*)

MIRIAM I thought you were bringing Pinkie with you

ITCHY The nurse is giving him his bottle—in the canteen

MIRIAM (*picking up a drink at the bar*) Him and that liquor! Y'know what? (*Grimly*) I'm gonna get plastered tonight I'm gonna get so plastered, I'll be drunk!

ITCHY Past out, you mean Two drinks and you're under Poor Butterfly, she no can take it (*To TEDDY*) Say, Teddy, is Chick pulling a gag or something? He ast me if it's O K to bring Gussie

TEDDY (*with forced enthusiasm*) I hope you said it was all right

ITCHY Sure "Bring her along," I says "She'll be the death of the party!" (*All the girls laugh, TEDDY a bit too heartily*)

TEDDY Oh, you mustn't talk that way about Gussie She's a very nice girl

FAY (*laughing as she walks to TEDDY*) "The death of the party!" Isn't he a scream, Teddy? (*Sotto voce*) Y'know, you're not fooling me!

ITCHY (*crossing to them with drinks*) Here we are, my chickadees A little something fa the throat

FAY (*plucking olive from her glass*) I don't like olives in my drink To me an olive belongs on a plate next to a piece celery (*Suddenly offstage voices are heard in song, faintly at first and louder as "FINGERS approach"*)

VOICES

There's a long, long trail awinding
Along Camp Kare-Free's mountain
road,
Where good times and pleasures
wait you,
And life's an easy load—

ITCHY (*through this*) Here comes Captain Henry's Showboat Got ev-veything ready?

FAY Gee, the cigarettes I forgot to put out (*Hurries to do this*)

MIRIAM (*extending glass*) Here, gimme another drink I might's well catch up with Pinkie

VOICES (*now directly at door*)

There's a long, long time of frolic
And of dreams all come true—

(*The door opens and about a dozen CAMPERS, led by SAMMY playing the guitar, stand framed in doorway Their assorted costumes make them look more like Jewish night-riders than celestials GUSSIE, an exotic siren, has a firm grip on CHICK's arm*)

ALL

So when summer time is over
You'll feel fresh and clean and
new

(*There are ad lib cries and greetings as they pour into room and divest themselves of their coats, robes and blankets TEDDY is an energetic and smiling hostess, greeting each guest just a bit too enthusiastically*)

TEDDY (*to BARNEY*) Oh, don't you look wonderful? Please let me have your blanket

BARNEY Shoy tung foo yung how
ming moy low ung Rang chop chop
soy

SOPHIE That really means some-
thing?

BARNEY Sure It means hello in
Japan

ITCHY So carbohic acid, carbohic acid
That's good-bye in any langwich!

GUSSIE (*coming forward with*
CHICK) That walk we had along the
lake knocked me out I gotta have a
drink, Chick

CHICK (*eyeing TEDDY*) O K

GUSSIE (*following his gaze*) I'll get
one glass so we'll make it a loving
cup! (*She joins the others at the bar*
where ITCHY is shaking cocktails
CHICK crosses to TEDDY who has
picked up a tray of sandwiches from
bench)

CHICK Look I don't want you to get
me wrong—

TEDDY (*regally*) Are you address-
ing me by any chance?

CHICK No, I just like to hear myself
talk

TEDDY I beg your pardon, but I hap-
pen to be extremely choosy about
who talks to me (*She starts away but*
he grabs her wrist)

CHICK Listen, Miss Stern It is not
that I wish to talk to you—

TEDDY (*the Dorothy Parker!*) So I
notice!

(CHICK releases his grip, and looks
self-consciously about him)

CHICK I—I just wanna say one thing
and then, as far as you're concerned,
I'll forever hold my peace

TEDDY Can I count on that?

CHICK (*heatedly*) You certainly
can! (*Collecting himself*) All I wan-
na say is that you weren't at the table
for supper, so I set aside some food
for you It's on the shelf of that little
stand outside the kitchen door, under
a napkin And believe me, I do not
care whether you eat it or not!

GUSSIE (*coming between them, hold-
ing a glass of beer*) Here, Chickie

CHICK Ah, here we are!

TEDDY Excuse me, Gussie I would
like to give a final word to your es-
cort Tell him I'm grateful for the
details, but he's mistaken I ate very
substantially, thank him

GUSSIE You want me to tell him?
He's not deaf (*To CHICK*) Are you?

CHICK We're just kidding around,
Gussie Ask her where?

GUSSIE (*sitting on bench*) He wants
to know where

TEDDY At another table— (*Quickly*)
Tell him (*Picking up the tray of*
sandwiches) Excuse me

GUSSIE Oh, sandwiches! I'll have
some of them, please

CHICK Gussie, how on earth can you
be so hungry after what we had at the
canteen?

GUSSIE I dunno Guess I developed
an appetite.

TEDDY (*impatiently*) Please make your selection Some people may be hungry, you know

CHICK (*significantly*) Yes I know one

(**TEDDY** starts for door with the sandwiches and is about to exit when **BARNEY** shouts to her)

BARNEY Hey don't run away with the food! (*She allows him to take the tray from her The victrola music is now on and several couples are dancing TEDDY smiles at SCHMUTZ*)

TEDDY Wanna dance, Schmutz?

GUSSIE (*ready to share everything with CHICK*) Wanna go halfies, Chick?

CHICK You wanted them so much Go on—eat them

GUSSIE (*as ITCHY taps for attention*) I'll eat 'em later

ITCHY Folks, I wanna welcome you to this farewell Japanese party given tonight in honor of Miss Fay Fromkin's going away But I don't wanna welcome you unless you join in the spirit of the thing That means you gotta take off that robe, Barney

BARNEY Why don'tcha speak fa yourself, Jake? What about the one you got on?

SOPHIE Yeah, why not take off your own robe?

ITCHY O K If that's the way you feel about it, I will (*He removes his robe revealing a costume made of a false dickey on which a grotesque design has been painted, and a pair of bright red pajama trousers This sight*

is met with hearty laughter, the heartiest roar coming from ITCHY)

BARNEY The biggest mustard plaster in the world!

GUSSIE He looks like a Japanese cannibal (*CHICK goes to bar accompanied by GUSSIE who glances over her shoulder at TEDDY*)

ITCHY I've been waiting to flash these all night but the damn weather spoiled evveything

CHICK Suppose we have another drink, Gussie?

GUSSIE Sure Why not?

(**PINKIE** enters, removes coat and throws it on cot **MIRIAM** weaves unsteadily toward him)

MIRIAM Pinkie! I've been waiting fa you Where you been?

PINKIE I've been to New York and back Where do you think—?

MIRIAM (*smiles fatuously and taps him*) Hello

PINKIE You look pale What's the matter? (*She sways unsteadily He grabs her around waist and pulls her toward her cot*)

FAY Fresh drinks Who'll have a nice— (*Sees MIRIAM being put to bed and rushes forward to assist PINKIE*) What happened?

PINKIE A couple drinks and out she goes like a Chanukeh light (*To MIRIAM*) Come on, Schmuggeggie—flop!

MIRIAM Oh, my goodness! The room is going round and round just like a bicycle Round and round it goes.

FAY. Poor gul, the drinks made her topsy

PINKIE (*taking blanket from HENRIETTA's cot*) Here, put this over you—(*He finds an enormous brassiere in the folds of the blanket, and holds it up*) My God, a straitjacket! (*He looks at FAY*)

FAY Don't look at me It's Henrietta's

PINKIE What does she carry around—cannon balls?

FAY (*placing blanket over MIRIAM*) Cover up, Miriam You'll be aw right (*TEDDY looks over and notices the outstretched MIRIAM*)

MIRIAM Round and round it goes

TEDDY (*approaching*) What happened?

HI (*dancing by with one of the GIRLS*) Victim number one! The party's a success!

PINKIE (*as TEDDY comes closer*) Well, look who's here! Yum, yum, don't you look nice?

TEDDY Aw, poor Miriam

PINKIE Serves the little screwball right She shouldn't drink—with her stomach Lookit her—dead to the world

TEDDY The poor kid (*PINKIE glances around room and observes GUSSIE staring lovingly into CHICK's eyes*)

PINKIE Say, how come you're in circulation alluva sudden?

TEDDY (*looks up, sees CHICK and turns quickly away*) Sorry, but I don't understand

PINKIE You understand With a nice dish like you here, why is the boy friend trotting that horse around?

TEDDY He's not my boy friend, and furthermore I'd rather we dropped the subject

PINKIE Ah, ha, a lovers quarrel! What a lucky break fa me (*Taking her arm*) You owe me a dance, young lady

TEDDY Oh, do I?

PINKIE Yes, ma'am (*They start dancing*) You dance a very nice fox-trot I've watched you

TEDDY But I have to serve—(*They inadvertently collide with CHICK and GUSSIE*)

CHICK (*starting for bar*) Let's have another drink, Gussie The floor seems very crowded

GUSSIE Aw, Chick, we were dancing so nice (*The door opens and TOBIAS comes into the room Conversation quickly dies as all eyes turn to him*)

TOBIAS (*unctuously*) Excuse me fa butting in on the party (*He takes a confidential tone The tension is relieved*) There's a couple soreheads on the girls' side and evveything is with them a complaint—the food, the bunks, the boats—but evveything So go ahead—enjoy yesselves—oney quiet, see, these soreheads shouldn't complain.

AD LIB Sure, sure Don't worry, we'll keep very still. We'll pipe down.

CHICK We'll be as quiet as mice

TOBIAS (*walking toward him*) Oh, so you're here, too, Chick You having a good time?

CHICK (*smiling*) Yes, Mr Tobias I'm having a swell time

TOBIAS (*with forced heartiness*) That's fine, 'cause I run this camp just fa you alone I run up heavy expenses just so you should be happy, Mr Sport

CHICK I don't know what you mean

TOBIAS Look My name is Tobias, not Rockefeller I spend good money on canoe-cushions, not you (*To others*) So he takes out a boat fa a good time and now—good-bye the cushions

CHICK Gee, I—I must've forgotten them

TOBIAS What's the matter with you these days, Kessler? Maybe if I make you pay fa the cushions you lost—

TEDDY They're not lost, Mr Tobias They were left on Eagle Rock

ITCHY (*giving his hands a dry-wash*) Aha, they were on Eagle Rock!

SCHMUTZ Boy, if them cushions could oney talk—oh, Mama!

TOBIAS (*turning to CHICK*) You get the cushions first thing in the morning Keep up this foolishness and you'll be canoe-riding back to New York You understand me? (*CHICK lowers his head in embarrassment* TOBIAS turns to the others and puts on his faucet smile) Well, go on evveybody—have a good time—enjoy

yesselves (*There are ad lib good-nights as TOBIAS exits* ITCHY looks from CHICK to TEDDY)

ITCHY What were you two doing on Eagle Rock all afternoon? Go on, deny it!

SCHMUTZ What does anybody do on Eagle Rock? (*Sharpening his fingers*) Naughty, naughty

CHICK All right, have your fun at my expense—

TEDDY (*stung by the taunts*) There are some people who might like to enjoy the scenery and the mountain-side There are some people whose minds aren't so coarse they must constantly think of only one subject alone!

GUSSIE Yeah, and there are some people who forget to take canoe cushions back with them

BARNEY What's the matter? Wasn't the ground soft enough?

TEDDY (*furiously*) Shut up!

CHICK Another crack like that, Barney, and you won't be able to talk for a week I mean it!

BARNEY Aw, keep your shirt on I was oney kidding

GUSSIE Say, is this a party or a funeral? Let's have some music

ITCHY You're the music, Gussie Don'tcha know when you're playing second fiddle?

GUSSIE (*crossing to CHICK*) Yeah? Well, come around to Eagle Rock tomorra and you'll see me leading the whole orchester Am I right, Chick?

ITCHY (*as victrola is turned on*)
Come on, soaks—on with the dance
Let joy be unrefined!

PINKIE (*sympathetically, to TEDDY who is sitting on bench*) You're not having such a good time, are you? (*As she starts to speak*) Now don't lie

TEDDY I—I've got a headache

PINKIE This noise don't help much
Why don't we get some fresh air?

TEDDY It's kinda wet outside, isn't it?

PINKIE (*reaching for his coat*) We can walk to my bunk where it's nice and quiet and we can have a heart to heart talk Waddeya say? (*Holds the coat up invitingly for her Gussie's shrill laugh pierces the room*)

GUSSIE Now Chickie!

TEDDY (*quickly rising*) Will you tell me about your trips to Paris?

PINKIE Well, I'll do my best I din expect to give a lecture or else I woulda brought along my lantinslides— (*FAY comes into scene and notices TEDDY in coat*)

FAY Say, where do you think—?

PINKIE She's perfectly O K

FAY Oh, I—I din know (*She smiles approval and watches them exit*)

ITCHY (*in imitation of Mae West*)
I dunno Evvey time I have a drink
I wanna do something desperate

GUSSIE That ain't like her at all
Look This is the way Mae West

goes (*Indicating victrola*) Shut that thing off (*The music is stopped She heaves her hips and looks seductively at CHICK*) Hello, tall, dark and hand some Why don'tcha come up and see me some time? (*CHICK, embarrassed, looks nervously around*)

CHICK Cut it out, Gussie Cut it out

GUSSIE Oh, so you're the bashful type What you need is a little coax ing

CHICK (*pushing her hands away*)
Don't do that!

GUSSIE Look He can't take it (*CHICK forces a smile to his face and idly glances around room FAY watching him closely, approaches*)

FAY If you're looking fa Teddy, it may innerest you to know she's gone

CHICK That's very kind of you to furnish me with information that doesn't concern me in the slightest

GUSSIE We're getting along very fine and dandy Thank you fa asking

CHICK Sure!

FAY (*casually*) She went out a coupla minutes ago—with Pinkie

CHICK (*sharply*) She went out—with him?

FAY I thought you said you wasn't innerested (*CHICK hurries toward the door*)

GUSSIE Just a minute, Mr Chick You can't rush off and leave me flat (*But he goes She turns around and stares at the others in amazement*)
He did!

ACT TWO

SCENE III

PINKIE's bungalow The room is smaller than **TEDDY's** and contains only two cots one, lower right, is made up, the other, upper left, has an uncovered pillow and a rolled blanket on its bare mattress Above **PINKIE's** bed is the bathroom, and left of it the dresser on which rest several magazines, some hairbrushes and a bottle of Scotch Entrance into room is made through door down left Two wicker side chairs and a small table are in center, a wicker armchair up left The room is sloppy and disorderly with shirts, shorts and other articles of apparel hung carelessly on hooks **PINKIE's** wardrobe trunk plastered with foreign travel labels stands in a corner

The curtain rises and **PINKIE** hurries to window near his cot to lower the canvas flaps **TEDDY** drapes the coat over a chair and wrings the cuffs of her pajamas The sound of rain is heard as it beats against the roof

TEDDY Leaving the party wasn't such a good idea

PINKIE It's lucky fa me we left that party or else I'd be swimming in that cot tonight

TEDDY (raises rear flap and stares out) Just listen to it come down I—I hope it lets up soon

PINKIE Thirty-seven fifty they soak me fa a bunk on the lake-front And what do I get? The lake-front in my bunk! If we could've found that damn path we could've got here in ten minutes

TEDDY You better be careful you don't catch cold

PINKIE Thanks for reminding me I've got a very good cure fa a cold (Taking whiskey bottle from dresser) You like Scotch?

TEDDY (the woman of the world) Oh, I don't mind indulging once in a while

PINKIE We might as well make ourselves comftible as long as it's raining (Produces several glasses and pours a stiff drink)

TEDDY Not so much! You'll have me drunk in no time

PINKIE Please, young lady, whatever you do, don't pull a Miriam on me One dead pigeon is plenty!

TEDDY (taking proffered drink) Thank you Do you—do you happen to have any ginger ale?

PINKIE What kinda saloon do you think I run here? Ginger ale I should have yet! If you wanna travel and see the world you might as well learn how to drink Take it plain That's

the best way (*Raising his glass*) Here's hoping you get your wish and that your next vacation will be in Paris

TEDDY Thank you (*Takes a sip and slowly sinks into chair*) Oooh, this burns! It's just like fire Have you any water?

PINKIE Don't take a chaser—that spoils a drink Drink like we do in Paris bottoms up with the rest

TEDDY I—I can't I'm afraid I'm not that used to it

PINKIE (*filling the glasses*) It's simple Look (*He takes a generous swig*) Come on now Lemme see you do it (*Thus challenged TEDDY rises, sips, winces, smiles nervously and glances toward door*)

TEDDY And now I think I better be getting back It's late and it's such a long walk—

PINKIE Aw, that's too bad—just when we're getting to know each other Why don'tcha wait till it stops raining? Then you can— (*The door opens and CHICK, a figure of wrath—a very wet and breathless figure of wrath—storms in He addresses TEDDY in a voice heavy with icy sarcasm PINKIE, amused, seats himself at table and follows the quarrel with considerable interest*)

CHICK So this is the highly respectable young lady who bawled me out something fierce today! And now look at her!

PINKIE (*dryly*) Hello, Chick

CHICK I'm not talking to you!

PINKIE. Not even a tiny little hello? Aw!

TEDDY You certainly have one great big nerve following me here

CHICK As I was leaving the party your charming friend, Fay, was only too anxious to tell me you went off with this person here, and I knew exactly the result But exactly!

TEDDY I hope you're not disappointed

CHICK Far from it, I assure you What I visualized in my mind is precisely what happened—right to the dot!

TEDDY Maybe you can visualize yourself right out of here I'm not used to having people intrude on me and then bawling me out in the bargain

CHICK I'm exceedingly sorry I'm hurting your feelings, Miss Teddy Stern It won't happen again, let me assure you from the bottom of my heart (*Starts to go and then turns*) And furthermore, may I remind you that you were the righteous one who was so shocked by what I said today?

TEDDY And may I remind you that I'm not deaf, God forbid? (*Laughs and looks at PINKIE for approval of this mot*)

CHICK It gives me a big laugh to behold the marvelous spectacle of you, all alone, in your pajamas—

TEDDY It so happens there's an Oriental party going on in my bunk—

CHICK But this isn't your bunk, and you're here, in your pajamas— (*Point*

ing to whisky bottle) boozing around with a certain person—

PINKIE (*waving hand*) Hi, Chick!

TEDDY If you think that what you're saying disturbs me in the slightest, you're greatly mistaken. In the meantime, you'll oblige me greatly by getting out of here. Or can't you take a hint?

CHICK (*quietly, concealing his rage*) I'm sure I have no wish to continue this disgusting matter one bit further. Good-bye!

TEDDY Good bye! (*CHICK exits, slamming door*)

PINKIE You know, I think he's sore.

TEDDY (*miserably*) He's sore? And how do you suppose I feel?

PINKIE I dunno.

TEDDY The nerve! Spying on me and breaking in here and bawling me out! Who does he think he is, my owner or somebody?

PINKIE I'll tell you one thing, tootsie. That tray-carner's cuckoo over you.

TEDDY He certainly has a remarkable way of showing it. (*In sudden anger*) Why I didn't slap him one—!

PINKIE (*rising to pour another drink*) Calm down and drink this. You'll feel better.

TEDDY No, thanks.

PINKIE Don't tell me it struck home?

TEDDY What did?

PINKIE What he said about boozing around here?

TEDDY Oh, that. (*Quickly picking up drink*) Here's to your health. (*She gulps it and almost chokes in a fit of coughing*) Get me some water—quick! (*He hurries into bathroom as she falls into chair*) That's not Scotch—that's a red-hot rivet. My insides are on fire. Oh, I feel terrible! That damn Chick! (*PINKIE appears with the glass of water*) Thank you.

MR G'S VOICE (*accompanying a knock on the door*) Somebody is in bunk five?

PINKIE (*in whisper to the frightened TEDDY*) That sounds like Mr. G.

TEDDY My God, what'll he think—me in my pajamas! (*There is another knock on the door*)

PINKIE Don't worry, I'll take care of him. (*Propelling her toward bathroom*) Get into the bathroom. (*She goes in, closing door behind her*)

MR G'S VOICE Hello, in bunk five.

PINKIE (*to himself as he crosses*) What the hell is this—a public library? (*Opens door and admits MR G who is wearing raincoat, hat, over shoes*) Oh, Mr. G, it's—it's you.

MR G (*coming into room*) I was peering and I seen boining the 'lectric light. So I say to myself, "Mr. G, maybe Pinkie's sick inside." So I figger— (*Sits himself at table*)

PINKIE I was just going to bed.

MR G (*pointing to bottle of Scotch*) Look, a regellch saloon is here. A

bummer you wanna be, a nice boy like you?

PINKIE I caught a cold, and now with this rain—

MR G (*leaping to his feet*) A cold? Listen! I got by me in bunk a special meditzin, in two minutes guzz quick away the cold You want I should bring it?

PINKIE Not now, Mr G I'm gonna hit the hay

MR G (*walking toward door*) So how long it takes to bring it? A second!

PINKIE Cant'cha see I'm dead tired and I wanna get some sleep?

MR G (*taken aback by his tone*) O K, so in the munning I'll bring it (*Sits on edge of cot and prepares to go into detail*) I got it a special 'scription fomm mine docteh You take a spoon in the munning, and comes night time—

PINKIE (*helping him up*) Yeah, yeah, but if I don't get some sleep, I'll need a doctor Good night!

MR G (*good-naturedly*) Good night Good night (*Pauses at door and turns*) So in the munning I'll come (*He exits PINKIE closes the door and heaves a sigh of relief*)

PINKIE He's gone (*As TEDDY appears from bathroom*) It was Mr G

TEDDY And now I really must go home

PINKIE What for?

TEDDY (*weakly*) I—I haven't had a bite of food since morning

PINKIE No ludding?

TEDDY All I had at the party was some of that cocktail stuff Itchy made—

PINKIE And on top of that some Scotch Say, what keeps you on your feet? (*She shrugs her shoulders to convey that this drinking bout is quite common with her She then extends her hands and smiles*)

TEDDY Well, good night I certainly had a very nice time

PINKIE But you can't walk to your bunk in this weather You'd never find your way alone, and you'd be soaked to the skin It'll let up soon (*He picks up bottle and fills his glass*)

TEDDY I don't know what to do It must be awfully late (*Turns and sees PINKIE pouring drink*) No more for me (*As he raises glass*) Don't you think you've had enough?

PINKIE Don't worry, I can stand it It don't burn me (*TEDDY goes to rear window, lifts the flap and stares anxiously out*)

PINKIE You poor kid You're worried, aren't you? (*She nods*) And it ain't the weather

TEDDY (*wheeling around*) Why, what on earth—?

PINKIE It's this guy, Chuck He's got you tied in knots, hasn't he? Take my advice and forget it He's strictly small-time stuff These college boys, they know fomm nothing

TEDDY Please don't worry about me As far as Chuck's concerned, I don't even know he exists

PINKIE (*going toward her*) Sit down, young lady

TEDDY Sure (*She is about to take the armchair and then stops*) It's wet!

PINKIE O K, so we'll dry it (*He picks up a striped silk shirt from top of dresser and hands it to her*)

TEDDY Not with your shirt! (*Fingering material*) Is that silk?

PINKIE (*modestly*) Yes, ma'am Solid silk Feel it My pajamas, socks—the same way That's the oney thing I wear (*As TEDDY dries chair*) Too bad you're nuts about that Chick

TEDDY I'm not nuts about Chick, and I don't know what you mean by too bad

PINKIE I had my eye on you fomm the very first time I saw you

TEDDY Haven't you got me mixed up with a girl named Miriam?

PINKIE That *schmuggeggel*! She's strictly hit-and-run stuff! You're more my type, Teddy (*Surveying her slowly*) Yes, sir, with a little breaking in and the rough edges taken off, you'd be a very tasty dish, honey

TEDDY (*uncomfortably*) Honey! Another drink and there's no telling what you'll be calling me

PINKIE You've got me wrong I'm not drunk, young lady I'm leveling with you

TEDDY You're what with me?

PINKIE Sit down (*She sits on edge of armchair*) I'm stricly right-fomm-

the-shoulder No beating around the bush I don't hand out a line of *shmoos*—not even in business Me, I talk plain turkey

TEDDY I must be stupid or something, but I just don't get your drift

PINKIE Here we are, the two of us, alone in the bunk together Outside it's pouring with rain Listen (*He pauses The patter of rain punctuates the silence*) What a perfect set-up! You're in your pajamas, and it'd take me two minutes to get into mine (*TEDDY jumps to her feet and throws the wet shirt she has been holding at him*)

TEDDY You filthy, no-good tramp! What do you think I am anyway?

PINKIE Sha, sha! Don't get so excited Want the whole camp to hear you? (*Now takes bantering tone*) I thought with Chick moving out, I could sorta take his place

TEDDY (*furiously*) I wish he were here this minute so that he could smash you right in that rotten mouth of yours!

PINKIE Yep, I bet he would Just like he did a little while ago when he was here

TEDDY So this is how a young business man behaves! This is what all your traveling on boats and going to Paris teaches you!

PINKIE You said it, kid! (*Turns to her*) Now get me straight I'm not gonna keep on begging you With three dames to evvey fella a guy is nuts to argue— (*As TEDDY picks up his coat*) Oh, no, you don't! That's my coat and I'm particular who wears

it You wanna leave, leave in your pajamas

a sigh) Ah, I might as well get dressed and take you home

TEDDY I'm getting out of here

TEDDY (sitting on arm of chair) No, thanks I'd rather go home with the flashlight

PINKIE Good-bye, please (TEDDY leaves PINKIE removes his shirt, takes off his shoes and reaches for his pajama top—a gaudy affair with his monogram prominently scrolled on it There is a knock, he rises and speaks, exasperatedly) Come in, Mr G (TEDDY, more frightened than ever, enters)

TEDDY It—it's worse than ever outside I'm scared

PINKIE Wait a minute Maybe I changed my mind I got pride, too

TEDDY It's pitch-black outside Will you lend me your flashlight? (As he hesitates) I promise to return it

PINKIE Now I gotta go hunting flashlights!

TEDDY (moving unsteadily toward chair) If it's too much trouble—

PINKIE (rummaging through drawer) I'll see if I can find it

TEDDY Don't bother

PINKIE It's in this drawer some place unless some tootsie's taken it (With

PINKIE I never argue with a lady (Digs deeper into drawer and unearths the flashlight) Ah, here it is (Gives it to her, gets his pajama trousers and exits into bathroom) And now, ladies and gentlemen—(In imitation of Ben Bernie) the time has come to lend thine ears and say, "Au revoir" until the same time tomorrow night Your broadcaster is Pincus J Aaronson who's had a little tough luck tonight trying to do a little broadcasting of his own Nighty-night and pleasant dreams (The flashlight falls from TEDDY's hand PINKIE, in his pajamas, comes from bathroom and observes TEDDY slumped in chair) Hey, I just said, "Nighty-night" Bong, bong, bong! (TEDDY's head sinks to her chest and her hand falls to her side He rushes to her) Aw, fa God's sakes! (He lifts her gently and places her full length on cot He pauses, shakes his head, picks up the blanket and covers her He crosses to turn out light, stops and looks back at the slumbering TEDDY with amused resignation) I shoot more dead pigeons!

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

SCENE I

TEDDY's bungalow, the following morning The room is a shambles The bar, piled high with débris, and several tattered lanterns suspended from the hooks are forceful reminders of the party

FAY, in beach pajamas, walks slowly from the bathroom wiping her hands on a towel She walks to TEDDY's empty cot, stares pensively at it, gets her watch, consults it and shakes her head, deeply troubled The door-knob rattles and she wheels around to meet HENRIETTA who enters briskly with several letters she has received

HENRIETTA Good morning, lazy-bones

FAY Good morning

HENRIETTA (*slumping into chair and examining her mail*) What's happened to everybody? The dining-room appears like a regular morgue Completely deserted!

FAY (*attempting to be casual*) Well, Teddy's having breakfast, isn't she?

HENRIETTA No And she was already out when I got up I guess she's already concluded her breakfast

FAY Was it very late when you got in last night?

HENRIETTA To tell you the honest truth, I didn't even notice the time

FAY I mean, was—was everybody asleep when you got in?

HENRIETTA I guess so All I know is that I was so exhausted, I barely

had the strength to take off my clothes and— (*MIRIAM comes in from bathroom and shuffles toward her cot She is wearing rompers*) Lo and behold, the sleeping beauty is up!

MIRIAM (*balefully*) Is it late?

FAY They awready announced breakfast

MIRIAM (*grimaces and gingerly feels her head*) God, it feels like an elephant is having a baby in my head!

FAY You got a hangover, that's all

MIRIAM (*flopping on bed*) That's enough! (*There is a knock on the door*)

FAY Come! (*ELI enters and looks around*)

ELI Teddy isn't here?

FAY What is it?

ELI I gotta message fa her

FAY So what's the message? I'll give it to her

ELI No This is strictly private This certain party told me to give it oney to Teddy

FAY What party?

ELI (*hunching his shoulders*) I'm not saying This certain party don't want their name known She isn't here, huh?

FAY She may be in the dining room having breakfast

ELI (*starting for the door*) I'm going over there now, and I'll look

HENRIETTA (*rising and going toward MIRIAM*) Wait a minute, Eli Miriam, what your system requires is a little nourishment Why don't you order some breakfast?

MIRIAM (*groaning*) I'm sick I don't wanna thing

HENRIETTA But you've gotta have something After all, the human body is like a machine—

ELI (*crosses to her and yanks her sleeve*) Anyway, it's against the rules to serve breakfast in the bunks unless Mr Tobias says—

HENRIETTA You'll kindly inform Mr Tobias that we've got a sick person here, and even an invalid has to eat (*Solicitously, to MIRIAM*) What do you wish, Miriam?

MIRIAM Nothing.

FAY You better have a large glass of temata juice

HENRIETTA That's precisely what a dietician would recommend

MIRIAM Oh, O K

ELI Temata juice—that's all?

HENRIETTA In a very large glass (*As ELI starts to withdraw*) Wait, Eli (*Turning to MIRIAM*) You might as well order some eggs while you're about it They don't charge you extra Go on, Miriam

MIRIAM (*weakly as she gets into sitting position*) Well, maybe I'll have a coupla medium-boiled eggs, and some crisp bacon— (*This is too much for ELI he whips his pad and pencil from pocket and writes*) and some cawfle and a few pieces Melba toast The Melba toast should be very thin (*She sinks back, exhausted*)

HENRIETTA Got that?

ELI I got it, but I don't know if you'll get it (*He leaves FAY continues packing her bag which she has placed on TEDDY's cot*)

P A VOICE Attention, please Attention, please Last call for breakfast Last call for breakfast Thaaank you

MIRIAM Oh, my God!

FAY What'sa matter?

MIRIAM (*leaping out of bed*) Pinkie! He must've been up hours ago

FAY (*feeling her heart*) Did you gunme a shreck just now!

MIRIAM Listen, after working awmost two weeks on Pinkie I'd cer-

tainey hate to lose him now. (*Flees into bathroom*)

HENRIETTA (*sweeping crumbs from bed*) So that's why I could hardly sleep last night—pretzels in my bed! Such aggravation my class enemies should have! (*Noticing FAY's open bag*) What time are you departing?

FAY I'd planned to take the afternoon bus I've still got lunch coming to me

MIRIAM (*rushing out of bathroom*) Gosh, I hope nobody's got him dated up awready (*She gets into her sandals, turning her back on FAY to do so*)

FAY (*going to closet to get a linen suit*) I think I'll give my suit a little air

MIRIAM (*suddenly aware of the amenities*) Parm my back

FAY It's gonna seem funny getting into city clothes I bet I gained—(*To MIRIAM*) Did you say something just now?

MIRIAM I just said, "Parm my back"

FAY Oh, surely (*Turning to HENRIETTA*) Listen, I wanna go over the tip situation with you

MIRIAM I must look like a wreck (*With a wave of the hand*) Oh, the hell with it! See you later (*She exits*)

HENRIETTA What's there to go over? You give Clara, the cleaning woman, two dollars Eli gets a dollar, and you give Chick five dollars

FAY Five dollars! You must think I'm Mrs J P Morgan

HENRIETTA That isn't so much I figgered a ten-cent tip for each meal would come to four dollars and change at the end of two weeks Very well, so you make it an extra dollar

FAY I dunno about that I've been mauling it over in my mind, and Chick's attitude lately, specially to my girl friend, Teddy—

HENRIETTA (*primping herself at mirror*) I'm merely telling you what I'm leaving After all, tipping is a matter of individual preference entirely optional with the patron (*Fixes her hat and looks at her watch*) Say, you re gonna miss your breakfast

FAY I think I'll leave Teddy a note (*HENRIETTA exits FAY finds pencil and paper and starts writing a note*)

P A VOICE Attention please Aaron Berliner, go to your bunk, your wife is waiting Aaron Berliner, go to your bunk, your wife is waiting Thaaank you (*FAY sits on bed writing She is interrupted by a knock on the door*)

FAY Come! (*PINKIE enters He wears a bright silk shirt, flannel trousers and gray suede shoes He carries TEDDY's pajamas in a rolled bundle*)

FAY Oh, hello, Pinkie Funny you din run into her

PINKIE Run into who?

FAY Minam Why, she left just two seconds—

PINKIE I've come here about Teddy.

FAY (*nervously, as she rises*) Oh, Teddy She'll be back in a minute She—she went out fa a walk and she—

PINKIE Look Don't lud me, see? This is serious

FAY (*noticing the pajamas*) Why, they're—they're Teddy's pajamas! Wadde you doing with her pajamas? (*Angrily*) See here, Pinkie Aaronson, if this is some dirty trick you're playing on my girl friend, lemme tell you I think it's a rotten shame—!

PINKIE Will you kindly button that lip and lemme talk?

FAY What'd you do to her? Where is she? Please, Pinkie It's aw right to tell me I'm her friend

PINKIE I'll be glad to tell you if you'll oney pipe down (*He tosses pajamas on cot*)

FAY O K I'm piped down So what happened?

PINKIE She comes to my bunk last night and chews my ear off asting me all about Paris So it starts in to rain Pretty soon Chick comes over and bawls her out fa being in my bunk

FAY I wish some people would learn to mind their own business

PINKIE Well, he leaves and I see it's oney a lover's quarrel So I says, "Nighty-night I'm hitting the hay so you better go back to your bunk" Then Teddy says to me, "It's pouring" Would I mind if she stays till the rain lets up "Go ahead," I says, "but I'm a dead herring I'm hitting the hay" Well, sir, I hit the hay, and I wake up, and there it is—the next

day awready, and who do you suppose is on the other cot, fast asleep—?

FAY Teddy!

PINKIE So I wake her up and she gets scared stiff Here she is, on the men's side, with nothing on but her pajamas Right away she starts yelping about her reputation (*Placing hand on hip and tossing his head*) "Suppose somebody finds me in your bunk so early," she says "They'll put two and two together" "O K," I says, "so stay here till the fellas go in fa breakfast, then you can sneak out," I says, "and beat it over to the girls' side"

FAY A very good idear!

PINKIE "Oh, no!" says your friend, Miss Teddy "Chick saw me here last night and if I don't get back to the table fa breakfast he'll know I slept here"

FAY Again that Chick!

PINKIE Well, so she climbs into some of my things, and as soon as the coast is clear she jumps right off my porch and into the lake Steve Brody, the second!

FAY (*in alarm*) Must be at lease halfa mile fomm your bunk to the float My God, that takes years to swim!

PINKIE I tried to stop her I says to her, "Teddy, that's foolish—"

FAY (*hysterically*) Suppose she catches a terrible cramp in her foot or something! Suppose—suppose she drowns, God fabbid!

PINKIE Suppose you pipe down! Teddy's aw right The damn fool is

sitting out there on the float (*As FAY starts for door*) Where're you going?

FAY To the lake If there's no sign of her I'll get Hal and some life-guards to go out in a boat—

PINKIE Wait a minute I'll go with you, but get this straight You don't get me into any trouble, see I'm not to blame for this I kept asking her— (*The rattle of dishes is heard and CHICK appears in doorway with a tray of breakfast dishes*)

FAY (*brushing him aside*) Excuse me

CHICK (*shouting after her*) Where's Miriam?

PINKIE She'll be back in a minute I'm waiting for her (*CHICK comes into room and places tray on bar He stares at PINKIE and shifts awkwardly from side to side*)

CHICK I—I'm sorry about last night, Pinkie I guess you think I acted pretty strangely

PINKIE You were doing aw right

CHICK I realize now I had no business breaking into your place like a wild man I don't know why you didn't haul off and take a sock at me

PINKIE (*smiling*) What for? I was having too good a time listening to you

CHICK I was listening, too I could hear myself shouting at her, saying mean and nasty things And all the time I was hating myself for saying them Yet I—I just couldn't help it (*Lowering head in shame*) I behaved like some neurotic

PINKIE I had the sneaking feeling you were kinda sore

CHICK You see, Pinkie, I can't be like you when it comes to girls You can take them in your stride, and you'd 've been tactful But that is unusual with me, and I get out of my element

PINKIE (*the Don Juan*) You ought never to let them know where they stand

CHICK Sure You've had lots and lots of experience with them

PINKIE You never can have too much is what I anyways say

CHICK You see, I happen to be very fond of Miss Teddy Stern And when I heard she went to your bunk I was so—so furious, my first impulse was to do something desperate (*Reflectively*) I suppose you call it jealousy Then I started blaming you "That Pinkie rat!" I said to myself

PINKIE Lucky you din say it to me

CHICK All right, but you know you've got a pretty bad reputation with girls And when I ran out of here last night I kept thinking all kinds of terrible things My mind was like one of those old-fashioned movies I had visions of Teddy struggling with you—and you struggling with Teddy I ran through the rain hoping I'd get to your bunk in time to—

PINKIE (*sharply*) To what?

CHICK (*lamely*) Well, to—to break things up

PINKIE Too bad we disappointed you

CHICK I saw enough there to make me boil There she was, wearing pajamas, in another fella's bungalow, after midnight, and she's drinking Scotch and feeling very much at home! When I saw that I almost wished there had been something to oreak up!

PINKIE (*paternally*) Lemme take a load off your mind, Chick I'm not innerested in your Teddy, and the oney reason she was in my bunk was to burn you up Sure enough, she did So when she saw how you took it she starts in to cry So I let her cry and then I walked her back here (*Starts walking away from him and stops*) I guess you din come back here, dija?

CHICK No

PINKIE (*quickly resuming*) So I says— (*He picks up TEDDY's pajamas and addresses them*) "Here you are Now sit right," I says, "and if Chick really likes you he'll come to you and say so" (*Turning to him, benevolently*) Now, young fella, instead a chewing my ear off about what a sap vou was last night, suppose you go tell it to Teddy I gotta go and get me some more experience with girls

CHICK (*smiling*) Thanks, Pinkie And look, I wanna take back everything I thought about you (*FAY, wild-eyed, comes tearing in*)

FAY There's not a sign of anybody on the lake Pinkie, we've got to do something We've got to see Mr Tobias and tell him Teddy's drowned—

CHICK Teddy's what? What're you talking about?

FAY (*furiously*) You're the real cause of this! If Teddy's drowned it's be-

cause she hadda swim all the way back fomm Pinkie's bunk so that you wouldn't know where she spent the night!

PINKIE Shut up, you dumb cluck!

FAY (*tearfully as she sits on TEDDY's cot*) Oh, my poor Teddy! God oney knows what's happened to you!

PINKIE Will you pull vesself to gether and stop acting like a hysterical yenteh!

CHICK You must've gotten a lottu satisfaction outta me making a fool of myself Of all the cheap, tin-horn tricks— (*He lunges at PINKIE who grabs his arm*)

PINKIE Hey, before I split you in two, you oughta know this Your girl friend's just as pure— (*The door opens and the bedraggled TEDDY comes stumbling in, her hair stringy and dripping Her shorts are much too large for her, and the improvised halter just manages to serve its purpose*)

TEDDY Thank God, I'm here—

FAY Teddy, dolling, where've you been? You had me scared to death (*Embracing her*) Honestly, I thought—Say, you're wet!

TEDDY Get me a towel

CHICK (*icily, as he tries to leave*) Would you be so kind as to step aside? I feel superfluous being in this room (*TEDDY stares at him in amazement as he exits*)

FAY How'd you get here? I looked at the lake and you weren't there You ast Pinkie what I din go through the last few minutes

TEDDY (*staring off at porch*) What's the matter with Chick?

PINKIE This bright hunk girl here just told your boy friend where you slept last night

TEDDY Fay, you didn't!

FAY (*apologetically*) Well, Teddy, I din hear fomm you a whole morning and I thought surely you were drowned or something and nachelly I started in blaming Chick So it slipped out and—

TEDDY (*crossing to get into her slippers*) There are times when you can be an awful fool, Fay!

FAY That's the thanks I get fa going crazy with worry over you! Gee whiz!

PINKIE I—I brought you your pajamas Listen, young lady, if you ever visit me again, God fabbid, will you please bring a rowboat with you? It'll save wear and tear on the nerves

TEDDY (*mopping herself with towel*) After I go to all that trouble so that Chick won't know—

PINKIE Yeah, and what about me? I turn into a boy scout and tell him fairy stories about how you left my place last night crying tears over him And he believed it! But *schmiggeggie* here hadda take her thumb out of her mouth and talk!

FAY You leave me alone!

TEDDY (*heading for bathroom*) I've got to get to Chick right away I've got to tell him he's mistaken and I'm not what he thinks (*In response to knock*) Come! (*ELI enters* TEDDY

gives him a dismissive look and is about to hurry on)

FAY Oh, he's got a message fa you, Teddy

ELI He says he's tired of waiting and you should meet him fa breakfast

TEDDY Who?

ELI This certain party who's been waiting fa you

TEDDY Well, who is it?

ELI The first time it was a surprise, but now he says to tell you Sam Rappaport is here

TEDDY (*stunned*) Sam Rappaport!

ELI Uh, huh! He's unpacked his stuff and he's ready fa breakfast

TEDDY (*sinking slowly to cot*) Oh, my God!

PINKIE (*to FAY*) Who is this guy?

FAY The fella she's been engaged to (*Falling into chair*) Well, waddeya know? Sam is here!

(*PINKIE looks from the stricken TEDDY to the dumbfounded FAY His features break into a broad grin He, too, sits down and stretches his legs*)

ELI So what'll I tell him?

FAY She'll be there soon

TEDDY Wait a minute, Eli Tell Sam Rappaport to read the little booklet while he's waiting "Here at Camp Kare-Free, dull care and trouble quickly vanish— (*Her voice breaking*) 'neath Nature's magic spell "

ACT THREE

SCENE II

The Dining Room There are only slight changes in the setting of the dining room one of the smaller tables has been removed, and a poster announcing aquatic sports with prizes as the bait replaces the basketball announcement.

MR and MRS G are at their table The latter is digging industriously into her grapefruit, gutting the yellow shell which she soon picks up to drain the juice into her spoon The garrulous MR G is chatting with SCHMUTZ, who is serving them There is a steady stream of waiters moving in and out of kitchen

MR G And when Mr G makes a promise, let me tell you is a promise! So I'm bringing to Pinkie the special medizun should go away his cold, and I'm wukking to his bungalow, and what I see on his putch I'm not believing mine eyes! Is coming out a girl—quick, in a hurry-like (Using the water glass to illustrate) Look This is Pinkie's putch, and I'm stending like here— (He places his coffee cup near him During the latter part of his recital CHARLIE comes on escorting SAM RAPPAPORT, a prosaic-looking man with accordion-pleated features A dull sports suit hangs wearily from his thin body He wears pencils and pens clipped to his pocket, proudly, like medals Several newspapers and a magazine serve to anchor his coat MRS G and SCHMUTZ turn to stare MR G, deserted by his audience, is forced to examine the newcomer)

CHARLIE Right this way (To HI, who comes out of kitchen) Oney cawffee—

HI —and rolls for the late-comers. (CHARLIE glares at the disappearing HI and then directs his attention to SAM)

CHARLIE Take a seat anywhere This is Mr and Mrs Gottlieb

MR G Plain Mr G call me

CHARLIE And this is— (Severely, to SCHMUTZ who is bringing coffee to MRS G) What're you doing at these tables?

SCHMUTZ Relieving Chick Minnam is sick, and he's bringing her breakfast

CHARLIE Who gave him permission?

MR G (anxious to resume) So like I'm saying—

CHARLIE. I wanna have a serious talk with that young fella (To SAM, before he exits) Oh, your waiter is Schmutz

SCHMUTZ I—I din catch your name

SCHMUTZ Who is she?

SAM Rappaport Sam Rappaport

SCHMUTZ Hi ya, Sam What'cha having fa breakfast?

SAM I ain't so hungry Just bring me some cawffee with a roll

MR G Nu, so I'm stending like here—

MRS G (to SAM) You came here lest night?

SAM No This morning I came I drove up

MRS G In a machine?

SAM In my own car

MRS G Say, that's some long ride

SAM I wouldn't 've minded so much, but my radio hadda go dead on me (SCHMUTZ places coffee and a basket of rolls in front of SAM MR G, his audience before him, quickly resumes)

MR G So listen I'm stending here— (Turning to SAM who is breaking roll in half and dunking it into coffee) I'm just now telling a story is something funnv heppening this munning So like I say, I'm looking on Pinkie's puttch— (Parenthetically, to SAM) Pinkie is here in camp a fella And I see this girl, and she's coming fomm the bungalow, and right away quick she's jumping in lake (Plunges his finger into water glass to illustrate)

SCHMUTZ Dijja see her face?

MR G A question! Uf cuss I see the face!

MR G Never mind You know who she is awready (*Apologetically, to SAM*) Excuse me, please I'm not saying the name 'cause maybe you'll see her and it wouldn't look so nice Nu, so I say to myself, "Mr G, why is jumping this girl fomm puttch in the first place, and in the second place, what business she got in Pinkie's bungalow so early? Aha!" I say to myself "Remember lest night, Mr G, you was tukking to Pinkie? Was there on table a bottle *shnopp*s? Nu, so was there by him in bungalow a guest—this girl, and she was staying there the two of them together!"

MRS G (*rushing to the defense of her sex*) You know she was there a whole night! You was maybe under the bed (*Scornfully, turning to SCHMUTZ*) He knows positively was there the two together!

MR G (*witheringly*) Excuse me I know notting Evveything oney you know! Mrs Smott-like-anything!

MRS G I know you shouldn't tukk fomm such things Maybe it was Pinkie's fault—not the goil's!

MR G I'm saying something fomm the girl? I'm telling her name? I'm just saying was a young lady coming from Pinkie's place, and she was there a whole night That's all (He rises MRS G also pushes chair back and gets to her feet)

SCHMUTZ Why dincha say something to her?

MR G I said something to her I gave out a scrumm, "Teddy!" (*There is a*

violent reaction from MRS G) But she din hear
(SAM slowly lowers his saturated roll)

MRS G Mr Dope! You're not saying the name, hah?

MR G It—it slipt out by me

MRS G Why you don't advettice it in noocetpapers? (Exits slowly left followed out by MR G) Why you don't make a spitch bime radio should the whole world know Teddy Stern was in Pinkie's bungalow a whole night? (SAM freezes, unable to dig into his roll SCHMUTZ, marveling at the news, turns to him)

SCHMUTZ Gee, does that Pinkie knock 'em over! You don't know this dame, but to look at her you'd think she was sweet Miss Innocence herself Still, you never can tell! (He picks up tray and enters kitchen FAY comes on from porch, sights SAM, turns in door to grab TEDDY's wrist, and escorts her in)

FAY Sam Rappaport, where in the world did you spring fomm?

TEDDY (nervously) Hello, Sam I—I didn't expect to see you here

SAM (his voice in his shoes) Hello, Lessie

SCHMUTZ (coming in from kitchen) Oney cawfee and rolls fa the latecomers

TEDDY That's all right I don't want anything else (She moves up to FAY and speaks in a whisper) Why is SCHMUTZ waiting on the table? Where's Chuck?

FAY Hodda I know?

TEDDY Uh, huh!

SAM Well, Tessie, your mama told me to come up here as a supprise. And lemme tell you something I'm the party getting the supprise What I din just hear about you! (Stares at her and shakes his head) Tchh, tchh, tchh!

TEDDY What'd you hear?

FAY (raising her hand) Whatever it is, it s not true, and I'm a witness

SAM An elderly-looking man—he reminded me of Schlepperman on the radio—he had on a gold tooth and sat over there—

FAY (trading glances with the unhappy TEDDY) That Mr G!

SAM (querulously, as he rises) Who is this Pinkie-Schminkie fella who's turned you into—into something wild?

TEDDY I don't know what you're talking about, Sam

FAY It's Greck to me, too

SAM You think it's nice to sit at the table eating a piece roll and cawfee, and alluva sudden there's people talking about you? (Slumping into chair) I can still feel a piecc roll choking me, like a lump lead

P A VOICE Attention, Fay Fromkin. Attention, Fay Fromkin

FAY (leaping to her feet) My God—that's me!

P A VOICE Report to the awfice It's about some letters

FAY I bet I forgot to put on stamps like a dope.

F A VOICE It's about some letters Thaaank you

FAY (a parting admonition to TEDDY) Don't let him put anything over on you till I get back (She rushes off HI and CHICK's voice can be heard coming from kitchen The door opens and HI comes out carrying bread basket He almost collides with CHARLIE who comes on from left)

HI Say, Charhe, what's the matter with Chick?

CHARLIE Huh?

HI (pointing to kitchen) Go look (CHARLIE brushes him aside and hurries into kitchen TEDDY, who has heard this, rises and takes a step toward kitchen HI exits)

SAM (brooding, his head on hand) I felt you acted kinda hasty about that engagement proposition, Tessie, so I went and had a long talk with your mama I promised her I'd drive up here and stay a week Maybe you and me, we still could get together on our deal— (CHARLIE and CHICK can be heard in an argument TEDDY stands at kitchen door listening) our engagement But I dunno (The determined SAM now rises) I'm a business man, Tessie With me my merchandise must be in A-1 condition or else no sale

TEDDY That's fine

SAM The same is true with this marriage business So what happens? I come here, and this elderly party tells me my goods ain't like in the invoice!

TEDDY (about to enter kitchen) Excuse me, Sam

SAM He'll bring you your breakfast! (Taking her arm and bringing her forward) Let's get out of here

TEDDY Sam, I've got to see someone

SAM Frankly, Tessie, I don't like this camp It's no place for a young girl (Generously) I'll forget what I heard— (He is interrupted by the entrance of CHARLIE and CHICK from kitchen Latter is in city clothes and carries a suitcase which he brings to table near stand He opens it and starts packing law books, baseball glove, etc., which he takes from the shelves of serving stand near kitchen door)

CHARLIE You can't do this on a Saturday with the week-end so heavy If you wanna quit, wait till Monday at least

CHICK I don't wanna wait I'm leaving now

CHARLIE What's the great rush, for God's sakes, that you can't remain a coupla extra days? (TEDDY has crossed toward the two SAM watches her reactions with growing interest)

CHICK It's imperative that I'm on that morning bus and outta here as quickly as possible

CHARLIE You know what this means, don'tcha? Abe Tobias will keep every nickel you made in tips

TEDDY Wait a minute He earned those tips He's got to have them! (To CHICK) You were counting on that money What don't—?

CHICK. Will you please keep outta my affairs?

SAM (*making a great discovery*) So this is that so-called Pinkie!

SCHMUTZ (*entering from left and heading for kitchen*) No, that's Chick!

(*This is too much for SAM, who shakes his head, bewildered*)

CHICK (*to TEDDY, pausing in his packing*) I'm free, white and twenty-one, and able to make my own decisions

SAM The waiter's right, Tessie

CHARLIE We'll see what Abe Tobias has to say about this! (*Enters kitchen*)

SAM (*through this*) Tessie, we're leaving! You finish your breakfast, and I'll be back as soon as I pack my things (*Ominously*) But we're gonna have a very long talk on the way home! (*Exits*)

TEDDY (*as CHICK snaps his suitcase shut*) Look If you'll be calm for only two seconds I'd like to explain something to you

CHICK You owe me no explanation whatsoever!

TEDDY I know why you're leaving, Chick, and I give you my word you're jumping at the wrong conclusions

CHICK Oh, am I? Well, let me inform you that I was ready to apologize to you this morning for what I said and the way I acted In fact, I made a humiliating spectacle of myself by telling your dear and charming friend—

TEDDY. He's no friend of mine!

CHICK Pardon me Friend doesn't quite express what he is to you, does it? Well, to me he's nothing but a rotten, low-down, contemptible chaser!

TEDDY (*quietly, as she studies her shoes*) He's worse than a chaser

CHICK A flashy, blow-mouth sport, that's what he is! A rat of the lowest order!

TEDDY Even worse than that (*Looking up*) You should've heard the things he said about you last night

CHICK And I suppose you agreed with him!

TEDDY I did nothing of the kind! I give you my word, Chick—may I never leave this room again if—

CHICK Please! You're under no obligations to me What you do is your own responsibility (*Bridling*) But what gets me is how you, a girl who likes fine things, could fall for a cheap, petty chaser who'd go after anything in skirts—but anything!

TEDDY I didn't fall for him! (*A group of campers gather outside window attracted by the raised voices Several others come from dining room, napkin in hand, and stand listening*)

CHICK (*the lawyer cross-questioning the defendant*) Is a certain statement concerning your whereabouts true?

TEDDY That type is the last one in the world I'd—

CHICK Don't evade the issue! Is a certain statement true?

TEDDY This is what happened,
Chick I went—

CHICK (*unrelentingly*) Answer my
question Yes or no?

TEDDY Yes! Yes! But—

CHICK Yes, she says!

SCHMUTZ (*coming on from kitchen
and crossing stage*) You've oney got
five minutes to make that bus

CHICK (*picking up bag*) I'll make it

TEDDY But Chick, you've got to lis-
ten to me I—I don't even know your
address in New York I—

CHICK (*scornfully*) I admit I haven't
got your Mr. Pinkie's material means
But, as I pointed out, we've known
each other virtually six months! And
yet you let a relationship like ours
go to hell for a hat salesman with a
pocketful of pennies!

TEDDY (*seething*) You finished, Mr
Kessler?

SCHMUTZ (*crossing room*) Haven't
much time, Chick

CHICK All right (*Surveys TEDDY
and sadly shakes his head*) I once
had respect for you But now, now
all I've got left is contempt (*He
starts to go She grabs his arm and
wheels him around*)

TEDDY I've stood just about enough
of your insults Now I'm going to tell
you something Nothing happened
between me and that Pinkie—not one
single, solitary thing I couldn't leave
his bunk because it was pouring, and
he wouldn't even give me his coat
to put over my pajamas But I'll tell

you this how much money means to
me! I was in that bunk, thinking and
thinking, and I kept wishing I could
get away and see you, and talk to
you, and tell you how sorry I was be-
cause I behaved so silly on Eagle
Rock I was going to ask you to marry
me, money or no money, 'cause I had
a job, and I'd be willing to go on
working just to support you But I
wasn't willing to wait a whole year
for Sam—and he earns a very nice
living And the reason I wouldn't
wait, in spite of my mother's beg-
ging me and begging me, was that
way down deep in my heart I didn't
love Sam (*Her voice breaking*) But
for you, I'd work my fingers to the
bone So that's how much money
means to me, Chick Kessler! (*Tear-
fully*) And now, please do me a favor,
and go to hell! (*TEDDY goes to chair
and weeps into her arms There are
ad lib comments from the spectators
CHICK turns and sees them for the
first time*)

CHICK I hope you're having a good
time!

(*SCHMUTZ comes from the kitchen
and shoos them off with his towel*)

SCHMUTZ Come on, give 'em a break,
why don'tcha?

BARNEY (*coming from dining room,
to group at entrance*) What is this, a
public meeting place or something?
Break it up! Come on—out we go
(*The campers slowly dissolve CHICK
stares helplessly at the weeping
TEDDY*)

CHICK Aw, Teddy—Teddy, baby I
can't stand it when you cry (*She
checks her tears*) I didn't mean it,
darling I swear I didn't mean it I
was so jealous, I didn't know what I
was saying

SCHMUTZ (*again crossing stage*)
Well, there goes the bus!

TEDDY Honestly, Chick, nothing happened I just didn't wanna catch pneumonia, that's all

CHICK I know, baby I could tear my tongue out for saying such mean things

TEDDY I didn't mean them either—all except our getting married Oh, I meant that all right (*Glancing shyly at him*) Provided you still love me

CHICK I do I do But—

TEDDY But what?

CHICK I can't have you support me, Teddy You know that's impossible

TEDDY But why? There're so many girls doing it these days—girls who make far less than I do

CHICK But it's not right I've no job Who knows how long it'll last?

TEDDY Look, Chick (*Turns in chair toward him*) I know you'll say its awfully dopey, but I figger this way If there was a war, the men would go to the front and the women would stay behind and take care of their homes and children while the husbands were out there fighting (*Rising*) Well, it's almost like a war now, isn't it? With so many people fighting for jobs!

CHICK Oh, you darling! (*Takes her in his arms*) You'd hang onto a job you hate, for God knows how long, just to marry me? (*She nods*) You'd really do it, wouldn't you?

TEDDY (*again nodding*) Yes— (*As she turns away*) and I'm not thinking of the two weeks' free honeymoon next year either!

CHICK (*after kissing her*) I'll tell you what As soon as I clean up here we'll go to Eagle Rock and talk it over

TEDDY All right (*CHICK starts clearing dishes from table* TEDDY picks up law book he has left there and eyes it in admiration She riffles several pages and says, "A law book!" TOBIAS's voice is heard coming from dining room)

ROBIAS Let him carry his own grips to the train, nobody should give him a lift to the station Hear me, Charlie? We'll see how far that Chick— (*Enters, followed, as usual, by CHARLIE* He sights CHICK, and scowls) So, Kessler, alluva sudden you're going away, huh! No excuse, no notice—nothing! Just plain, "I quit!" and "Good-bye!"

CHICK It's a mistake, Mr Tobias (*Griming*) I'm not leaving

TEDDY (*rushing into CHICK's outstretched arms*) He's my intended! (*TOBIAS watches them in embrace and then turns to CHARLIE*)

TOBIAS (*irritably*) Listen, Charlie, why do you pick so much on Chick—? (*ELI comes out of kitchen carrying pail and mop* He starts piling the chairs on table preparatory to cleaning the dining room when he sees TEDDY in CHICK's arms He suppresses a yawn and turns away Such sights are not uncommon at camp MR TOBIAS, on the other hand, beams with delight at the embraced lovers He is already planning an announce-

ment for the bulletin board "Just as advertised in the little booklet, ABE TOBIAS, proprietor of Camp Kare-Free, takes pleasure in giving MISS TEDDY STERN and MR CHICK KESSLER two weeks' free vacation next season being as they met each other at camp and are now hereby engaged Two weeks' free vacation with posi-

tively no charge!" MR. TOBIAS's grin broadens "Say," he muses, "they're the first couple this season so it won't kill me if I throw in free transportation—both ways!"

(But this has nothing to do with the fact that the final curtain has already fallen)

Our Town

BY THORNTON WILDER

TO

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT

OF CASTLETON TOWNSHIP, RUTLAND COUNTY, VERMONT

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Our Town was first produced at the Henry Miller Theatre, New York City, by Jed Harris, on February 4, 1938, and closed on November 19, 1938
 Following is the original cast

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| STAGE MANAGER | Frank Craven |
| DR GIBBS | Jay Fassett |
| JOE CROWELL | Raymond Roe |
| HOWIE NEWSOME | Tom Fadden |
| MRS GIBBS | Evelyn Varden |
| MRS WEBB | Helen Carew |
| GEORGE GIBBS | John Craven |
| REBECCA GIBBS | Marilyn Erskine |
| WALLY WEBB | Charles Wiley, Jr. |
| EMILY WEBB | Martha Scott |
| PROFESSOR WILLARD | Arthur Allen |
| MR WEBB | Thomas W Ross |
| WOMAN IN THE BALCONY | Carrie Weller |
| MAN IN THE AUDITORIUM | Walter O Hill |
| LADY IN THE BOX | Aline McDermott |
| SIMON STIMSON | Philip Coolidge |
| MRS SOAMES | Doro Merande |
| CONSTABLE WARREN | E Irving Locke |
| SI CROWELL | Billy Redfield |
| BASEBALL PLAYERS | Alfred Ryder, William Roehrick, Thomas Coley |
| SAM CRAIG | Francis G Cleveland |
| JOE STODDARD | William Wadsworth |
| ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGERS | Thomas Morgan, Alfred Ryder, William Roehrick, Thomas Coley |

Technical direction by Raymond Sovey

Costumes designed by Helene Pons

The entire play takes place in Grover's Corners, N H, 1901 to 1913.

OUR TOWN

ACT ONE

No curtain

No scenery

The audience, arriving, sees an empty stage in half-light

Presently the STAGE MANAGER, hat on and pipe in mouth, enters and begins placing a table and several chairs downstage left, and a table and chairs downstage right

"Left" and "right" are from the point of view of the actor facing the audience "Up" is toward the back wall

As the house lights go down he has finished setting the stage and leaning against the right proscenium pillar watches the late arrivals in the audience

When the auditorium is in complete darkness he speaks

STAGE MANAGER This play is called "Our Town." It was written by Thornton Wilder, produced and directed by A [redacted] for produced by A [redacted], directed by B [redacted]. In it you will see Miss C [redacted], Miss D [redacted], Miss E [redacted], and Mr F [redacted], Mr G [redacted], Mr H [redacted], and many others. The name of the town is Grover's Corners, New Hampshire,—just across the Massachusetts line longitude 42 degrees 40 minutes, latitude 70 degrees 37 minutes. The First Act shows a day in our town. The day is May 7, 1901. The time is just before dawn. (A rooster crows.) The sky is beginning to show some streaks of light over in the East there, behind our mount'in. The morning star always gets wonderful bright the minute before it has to go. (He stares at it for a moment, then goes upstage.) Well, I'd better show you how our town lies. Up here—(That is parallel with the back wall) is Main Street. Way back there is the railway station, tracks go that way. Polish Town's across the tracks and

some Canuck families. (Toward the left) Over there is the Congregational Church, across the street's the Presbyterian Methodist and Unitarian are over there. Baptist is down in the holla' by the river. Catholic Church is over beyond the tracks. Here's the Town Hall and Post Office combined, jail's in the basement. Bryan once made a speech from these steps here. Along here's a row of stores. Hitching-posts and horse blocks in front of them. First automobile's going to come along in about five years,—belonged to Banker Cartwright, our richest citizen. Lives in the big white house up on the hill. Here's the grocery store and here's Mr. Morgan's drugstore. Most everybody in town manages to look into those two stores once a day. Public School's over yonder. High School's still farther over. Quarter of nine mornings, noon-times, and three o'clock afternoons, the hull town can hear the yelling and screaming from those school-yards. (He approaches the table and chairs downstage right.) This is our

doctor's house,—Doc Gibbs. This is the back door (*Two arched trellises are pushed out, one by each proscenium pillar*) There's some scenery for those who think they have to have scenery There's a garden here Corn peas beans hollyhocks heliotrope and a lot of burdock (*Crosses the stage*) In those days our newspaper come out twice a week,—The Grover's Corners *Sentinel*,—and this is Editor Webb's house And this is Mrs Webb's garden Just like Mrs Gibbs's, only it's got a lot of sunflowers, too Right here,—big butternut tree (*He returns to his place by the right proscenium pillar and looks at the audience for a minute*) Nice town, y'know what I mean? Nobody very remarkable ever come out of it, —s'far as we know The earliest tombstones in the cemetery up there on the mountain say 1670-1680— they're Grovers and Cartwrights and Gibbises and Herseys—some names as are around here now Well, as I said it's about dawn The only lights on in town are in a cottage over by the tracks where a Polish mother's just had twins And in the Joe Crowell house, where Joe Junior's getting up so as to deliver the paper And in the depot, where Shorty Hawkins is gettin' ready to flag the 5 45 for Boston (*A train whistle is heard* The STAGE MANAGER takes out his watch and nods) Naturally, out in the country—all around—they've been lights on for some time, what with milkin's and so on But town people sleep late So—another day's begun There's Doc Gibbs comin' down Main Street now, comin' back from that baby case And here's his wife comin' downstairs to get breakfast Doc Gibbs died in 1930 The new hospital's named after him Mrs Gibbs died first—long time ago in

fact She went out to visit her daughter, Rebecca, who married an insurance man in Canton, Ohio, and died there—pneumonia—but her body was brought back here She's up in the cemetery there now—in with a whole mess of Gibbises and Herseys—she was Julia Hersey 'fore she married Doc Gibbs in the Congregational Church over there In our town we like to know the facts about everybody —That's Doc Gibbs And there comes Joe Crowell, Jr, delivering Mr Webb's *Sentinel*

(DR GIBBS has been coming along Main Street from the left At the point where he would turn to approach his house, he stops, sets down his—imaginary—black bag, takes off his hat, and rubs his face with fatigue, using an enormous handkerchief MRS GIBBS has entered her kitchen, gone through the motions of putting wood into a stove, lighting it, and preparing breakfast Suddenly, JOE CROWELL, JR, starts down Main Street from the right, hurling imaginary newspapers into doorways)

JOE CROWELL, JR Morning, Doc Gibbs

DR GIBBS Morning, Joe

JOE CROWELL, JR Somebody been sick, Doc?

DR GIBBS No Just some twins born over in Polish Town

JOE CROWELL, JR Do you want your paper now?

DR GIBBS Yes, I'll take it —Anything serious goin' on in the world since Wednesday?

JOE CROWELL, JR Yessir My school-teacher, Miss Foster, 's getting married to a fella over in Concord

DR GIBBS I declare—How do you boys feel about that?

JOE CROWELL, JR Well, of course, it's none of my business,—but I think if a person starts out to be a teacher, she ought to stay one

DR GIBBS How's your knee, Joe?

JOE CROWELL, JR Fine, Doc, I never think about it at all Only like you said, it always tells me when it's going to rain

DR GIBBS What's it telling you today? Goin' to rain?

JOE CROWELL, JR No, sir

DR GIBBS Sure?

JOE CROWELL, JR Yessir

DR GIBBS Knee ever make a mistake?

JOE CROWELL, JR No, sir
(JOE goes off DR GIBBS stands reading his paper)

STAGE MANAGER Here comes Howie Newsome delivering the milk
(HOWIE NEWSOME comes along Main Street, passes DOCTOR GIBBS, comes down the center of the stage, leaves some bottles at MRS WEBB's back door, and crosses the stage to MRS GIBBS's)

HOWIE NEWSOME Git-ap, Bessie What's the matter with you?—Morning, Doc

DR GIBBS Morning, Howie

HOWIE NEWSOME Somebody sick?

DR GIBBS Pair of twins over to Mrs Goruslawski's

HOWIE NEWSOME Twins, eh? This town's gettin' bigger every year

DR GIBBS Going to rain, Howie?

HOWIE NEWSOME No, no Fine day—that'll burn through Come on, Bessie

DR GIBBS Hello, Bessie (*He strokes her*) How old is she, Howie?

HOWIE NEWSOME Going on seventeen Bessie's all mixed up about the route ever since the Lockharts stopped takin' their quart of milk every day She wants to leave 'em a quart just the same—keeps scolding me the hull trip (*He reaches MRS GIBBS's back door She is waiting for him*)

MRS GIBBS Good morning, Howie

HOWIE NEWSOME Morning, Mrs Gibbs Doc's just comin' down the street

MRS GIBBS Is he? Seems like you're late today?

HOWIE NEWSOME Yes Somep'n went wrong with the separator Don't know what 'twas (*He goes back to Main Street, clucks for Bessie and goes off right DR GIBBS reaches his home and goes in*)

MRS GIBBS Everything all right?

DR GIBBS Yes I declare—easy as kit-tens

MRS GIBBS Bacon'll be ready in a minute Set down and drink your coffee Child-run! Child-run! Time to

get up—George! Rebecca!—you can catch a couple hours' sleep this morning, can't you?

DR GIBBS *Hm!* Mrs Wentworth's coming at eleven. Guess I know what it's about, too. Her stum-mick ain't what it ought to be.

MRS GIBBS All told, you won't get more'n three hours' sleep. Frank Gibbs, I don't know what's goin' to become of you. I do wish I could get you to go away some place and take a rest. I think it would do you good.

MRS WEBB *Emileeee!* Time to get up! Wally! Seven o'clock!

MRS GIBBS I declare, you got to speak to George. Seems like something's come over him lately. He's no help to me at all. I can't even get him to cut me some wood.

DR GIBBS Is he sassy to you?

MRS GIBBS No. He just whines! All he thinks about is that baseball—George! Rebecca! You'll be late for school!

DR GIBBS *M-m-m*

MRS GIBBS *George!*

DR GIBBS *George, look sharp!*

GEORGE'S VOICE *Yes, Pa!*

DR GIBBS *(as he goes off the stage)* Don't you hear your mother calling you?

MRS WEBB *Wallee! Emileeee!* You'll be late for school! *Wallee!* You wash yourself good or I'll come up and do it myself.

REBECCA GIBBS'S VOICE. *Ma! What dress shall I wear?*

MRS. GIBBS Don't make a noise. Your father's been out all night and needs his sleep. I washed and ironed the blue gingham for you special.

REBECCA *Ma, I hate that dress.*

MRS GIBBS *Oh, hush-up-with-you.*

REBECCA Every day I go to school dressed like a sick turkey.

MRS GIBBS Now, Rebecca, don't be impossible. You always look very nice.

REBECCA. *Mama, George's throwing soap at me.*

MRS GIBBS I'll come up and slap the both of you,—that's what I'll do. *(A factory whistle sounds. The children enter and take their places at the breakfast tables. EMILY and WALLY WEBB, GEORGE and REBECCA GIBBS.)*

STAGE MANAGER *We've got a factory in our town too,—hear it? Makes blankets. Cartwrights own it and it brung 'em a fortune.*

MRS WEBB *Children! Now I won't have it. Breakfast is just as good as any other meal and I won't have you gobbling like wolves. It'll stunt your growth,—that's a fact. Put away your book, Wally.*

WALLY *Aw, Ma!*

MRS WEBB *You know the rule's well as I do—no books at table. As for me, I'd rather have my children healthy than bright.*

EMILY I'm both, Mama: you know I am I'm the brightest girl in school for my age I have a wonderful memory

MRS WEBB Eat your breakfast

WALLY I'm bright, too, when I'm looking at my stamp collection

MRS GIBBS I'll speak to your father about it when he's rested Seems to me twenty-five cents a week's enough for a boy your age I declare I don't know how you spend it all

GEORGE Aw, Ma,—I gotta lotta things to buy

MRS GIBBS Strawberry phosphates—that's what you spend it on

GEORGE I don't see how Rebecca comes to have so much money She has more'n a dollar

REBECCA (*spoon in mouth, dreamily*) I've been saving it up gradual

MRS GIBBS Well, dear, I think it's a good thing every now and then to spend some

REBECCA Mama, do you know what I love most in the world—do you?—Money

MRS GIBBS Eat your breakfast
(*The school bell is heard*)

THE CHILDREN Mama, there's first bell—I gotta hurry—I don't want any more

MRS WEBB Walk fast, but you don't have to run Wally, pull up your pants at the knee Stand up straight, Emily

MRS GIBBS Tell Miss Foster I send her my best congratulations—can you remember that?

REBECCA Yes, Ma.

MRS GIBBS You look real nice, Rebecca Pick up your feet

ALL Good-by
(*The children from the two houses join at the center of the stage and go up to Mam Street, then off left MRS GIBBS fills her apron with food for the chickens and comes down to the foot lights*)

MRS GIBBS Here, chick, chick, chick No, go away, you Go away Here, chick, chick, chick What's the matter with you? Fight, fight, fight,—that's all you do Him you don't belong to me Where'd you come from? (*She shakes her apron*) Oh, don't be so scared Nobody's going to hurt you

(*MRS WEBB is sitting by her trellis, stringing beans*)

MRS GIBBS Good morning, Myrtle How's your cold?

MRS WEBB Well, it's better, but I told Charles I didn't know as I'd go to choir practice tonight Wouldn't be any use

MRS GIBBS Just the same, you come to choir practice, Myrtle, and try it

MRS WEBB Well, if I don't feel any worse than I do now I probably will While I'm resting myself I thought I'd string some of these beans

MRS GIBBS (*rolling up her sleeves as she crosses the stage for a chat*) Let me help you Beans have been good this year

MRS WEBB I've decided to put up forty quarts if it kills me. The children say they hate 'em but I notice they're able to get 'em down all winter.

(Pause)

MRS GIBBS Now, Myrtle, I've got to tell you something, because if I don't tell somebody I'll burst.

MRS WEBB Why, Julia Gibbs?

MRS GIBBS Here, give me some more of those beans. Myrtle, did one of those second-hand furniture men from Boston come to see you last Friday?

MRS WEBB No—o

MRS GIBBS Well, he called on me. First I thought he was a patient wantin' to see Dr. Gibbs. 'N he wormed his way into my parlor, and, Myrtle Webb, he offered me three hundred and fifty dollars for Grandmother Wentworth's highboy, as I'm sitting here!

MRS WEBB Why, Julia Gibbs!

MRS GIBBS He did! That old thing! Why, it was so big I didn't know where to put it and I almost give it to Cousin Hester Wilcox!

MRS WEBB Well, you're going to take it, aren't you?

MRS GIBBS I don't know.

MRS WEBB You don't know—three hundred and fifty dollars. What's come over you?

MRS GIBBS Well, if I could get the Doctor to take the money and go away some place on a real trip I'd

sell it like that—Myrtle, ever since I was *that* high I've had the thought that I'd like to see Paris, France. I suppose I'm crazy.

MRS WEBB Oh, I know what you mean—How does the Doctor feel about it?

MRS GIBBS Well, I did beat about the bush a little and said that if I got a legacy—that's the way I put it—I'd make him take me somewhere.

MRS WEBB M-m-m. What did he say?

MRS GIBBS You know how he is. I haven't heard a serious word out of him, ever since I've known him. No, he said, it might make him discontented with Grover's Corners to go traipsin' about Europe, better let well enough alone, he says. Every two years he makes a trip to the battlefields of the Civil War and that's enough treat for anybody, he says.

MRS WEBB Well, Mr. Webb just *admires* the way Dr. Gibbs knows everything about the Civil War. Mr. Webb's a good mind to give up Napoleon and move over to the Civil War, only Dr. Gibbs being one of the greatest experts in the country just makes him despair.

MRS GIBBS It's a fact! Doctor Gibbs is never so happy as when he's at Antietam or Gettysburg. The time I've walked over those hills, Myrtle, stopping at every bush and pacing it all out, like we was going to buy it.

MRS WEBB Well, if that second-hand man's really serious about buyin' it, Julia, you sell it. And then you'll get to see Paris, all right.

MRS GIBBS Oh, I'm sorry I mentioned it. Only it seems to me that once in your life before you die you ought to see a country where they don't talk and think in English and don't even want to

(The STAGE MANAGER returns to the center of the stage)

STAGE MANAGER That'll do. That'll do. Thank you very much, ladies. (MRS GIBBS and MRS WEBB gather up their things, return into their homes and disappear) Now we're going to skip a few hours in the day at Grover's Corners. But before we go on I want you to know some more things about the town,—all kinds of things. So I've asked Prof Willard of our State University to come down here and sketch in a few details of our past history,—kind of scientific account, you might say. Is Prof Willard here? (PROF WILLARD, a rural savant, *prince-nez on a wide satin ribbon, enters from the right with some notes in his hand*) May I introduce Prof Willard of our University. A few brief notes, thank you, Professor,—unfortunately our time is limited

PROF WILLARD Grover's Corners let me see. Grover's Corners lies on the old Archeozoic granite of the Appalachian range. I may say it's some of the oldest land in the world. We're very proud of that. A shelf of Devonian basalt crosses it with vestiges of Mesozoic shale, and some sandstone outcroppings, but that's all more recent—two hundred, three hundred million years old. Some highly interesting fossils have been found. I may say unique fossils—two miles out of town, in Silas Peckham's cow pasture. They can be seen at the museum in our Univer-

sity at any time. Did you wish the meteorological conditions?

STAGE MANAGER Thank you. We would

PROF WILLARD The mean precipitation is 40 inches. The mean annual temperature is 43 degrees, ranging between 102 degrees in the shade and 38 degrees below zero in winter. The the uh

STAGE MANAGER Thank you, Professor. And have you Prof Gruber's notes on the history of human life here?

PROF WILLARD Hm, yes. anthropological data. Early Amerindian stock. Cotahatchee tribes. no evidence before the Tenth Century of this era. hm. now entirely disappeared. possible traces in three families. Migration toward the end of the Seventeenth Century of English brachycephalic blue-eyed stock. for the most part. Since then some influx of Slav and Mediterranean types.

STAGE MANAGER And the population, Prof Willard?

PROF WILLARD Within the town limits 2,640. The postal district brings in 507 more. Mortality and birth-rates are constant, by MacPherson's gauge. 6 032

STAGE MANAGER Thank you very much, Professor. We're all very much obliged to you, I'm sure.

PROF WILLARD Not at all, sir, not at all.

STAGE MANAGER This way, Professor, and thank you again. (Exit PROF

WILLARD) Now the political and social report Editor Webb—Oh, Mr. Webb?

(MRS WEBB *appears at her back door*)

MRS WEBB He'll be here in a minute He just cut his hand while he was eatin' an apple

STAGE MANAGER Thank you, Mrs Webb

MRS WEBB Charles! Everybody's waitin' (Exit MRS WEBB)

STAGE MANAGER Mr Webb is Publisher and Editor of The Grover's Corners *Sentinel* That's our local paper, y'know

(MR WEBB *enters from his house, pulling on his coat His finger is bound in a handkerchief*)

MR WEBB Hm I don't have to tell you that we're run here by a Board of Selectmen—All males vote at the age of 21 Women vote indirect We're lower middle-class, sprinkling of professional men 10% illiterate laborers Politically, we're 86% Republicans, 6% Democrats, 4% Socialists, rest, indifferent Religiously, we're 85% Protestants, 12% Catholics, rest, indifferent Do you want the poverty and insanity statistics?

STAGE MANAGER Thank you, no Have you any comments, Mr Webb?

MR WEBB Very ordinary town, if you ask me Little better behaved than most Probably a lot duller But our young people here seem to like it well enough 90% of 'em graduating from High School settle down right here to live—even when they've been away to college

STAGE MANAGER. Thank you, Mr. Webb Now, is there anyone in the audience who would like to ask Editor Webb anything about the town?

WOMAN IN THE BALCONY Is there much drinking in Grover's Corners?

MR WEBB Well, ma'am, I wouldn't know what you'd call *much* Satiddy nights the farmhands meet down in Ellery Greenough's stable and holler some Fourth of July I've been known to taste a drop myself—and Decoration Day, of course We've got one or two town drunks, but they're always having remorse every time an evangelist comes to town No, ma'am, I'd say likker ain't a regular thing in the home here, except in the medicine chest Right good for snake bite, y'know—always was

TALL MAN AT BACK OF AUDITORIUM Is there no one in town aware of—

STAGE MANAGER Come forward, will you, where we can all hear you—What were you saying?

TALL MAN Is there no one in town aware of social injustice and industrial inequality?

MR WEBB Oh, yes, everybody is,—somethin' terrible Seems like they spend most of their time talking about who's rich and who's poor

TALL MAN Then why don't they do something about it?

MR WEBB Well, we're ready to listen to everybody's suggestion as to how you can see that the diligent and sensible 'll rise to the top and the lazy and quarrelsome sink to the bottom We'll listen to anybody Meantime until that's settled, we try to

take care of those that can't help themselves, and those that can we leave alone—Are there any more questions?

LADY IN A BOX Oh, Mr Webb? Mr Webb, is there any culture or love of beauty in Grover's Corners?

MR WEBB Well, ma'am, there ain't much—not in the sense you mean. Come to think of it, there's some girls that play the piano at High School Commencement, but they ain't happy about it. Yes, and I see where my daughter's been made to read "The Merchant of Venice" over to the school. Seems all pretty remote to 'em, y'know what I mean. No, ma'am, there isn't much culture, but maybe this is the place to tell you that we've got a lot of pleasures of a kind here—we like the sun comin' up over the mountain in the morning, and we all notice a good deal about the birds. We pay a lot of attention to them, and trees and plants. And we watch the change of the seasons—yes, everybody knows about them. But those other things—you're right, ma'am—there ain't much—"Robinson Crusoe" and the Bible, and Handel's "Largo," we all know that, and Whistler's "Mother"—those are just about as far as we go.

LADY IN A BOX So I thought. Thank you, Mr Webb.

STAGE MANAGER All right! All right! Thank you, everybody. (MR WEBB retires) We'll go back to the town now. It's middle of the afternoon. All 2,640 have had their dinners and all the dishes have been washed. There's an early afternoon calm in our town—a buzzin' and a hummin' from the school buildings, only a few buggies on Main Street—the horses

dozing at the hitching-posts, you all remember what it's like. Doc Gibbs is in his office, tapping people and making them say "ah." Mr Webb's cuttin' his lawn over there, one man in ten thinks it's a privilege to push his own lawn mower. No, sir. It's later than I thought. There are the children coming home from school already.

(EMILY WEBB comes sedately down Main Street carrying some school books. There are some signs that she is imagining herself to be a lady of striking elegance. Her father's movements to and fro with the lawn mower bring him into her vicinity.)

EMILY I can't, Lois. I've got to go home and help my mother. I promised.

MR WEBB Emily, walk simply. Who do you think you are today?

EMILY Papa, you're terrible. One minute you tell me to stand up straight and the next minute you call me names. I just don't listen to you. (She gives him an abrupt kiss.)

MR WEBB Golly, I never got a kiss from such a great lady before. (He goes out of sight. EMILY leans over and picks some flowers by the gate of her house. GEORGE GIBBS comes careening down Main Street. He is throwing a ball up to dizzying heights, and waiting to catch it again. This sometimes requires his taking six steps backward.)

GEORGE Excuse me, Mrs Forrest.

STAGE MANAGER (as MRS FORREST). Go out and play in the fields, young man. You got no business playing baseball on Main Street.

GEORGE Awfully sorry, Mrs Forrest
—Hello, Emily

EMILY H'lo

GEORGE You made a fine speech in
class

EMILY Well . . . I was really ready
to make a speech about the Monroe
Doctrine, but at the last minute Miss
Corcoran made me talk about the
Louisiana Purchase instead I worked
an awful long time on both of them

GEORGE Gee, it's funny, Emily
From my window up there I can just
see your head nights when you're
doing your homework over in your
room

EMILY Why, can you?

GEORGE You certainly do stick to it,
Emily I don't see how you can sit
still that long I guess you like school

EMILY Well, I always feel it's some-
thing you have to go through

GEORGE Yeah

EMILY I don't mind it really It
passes the time

GEORGE Yeah —Emily, what do you
think? We might work out a kinda
telegraph from there to there, and
once in a while you could give me a
kinda hint or two about one of those
algebra problems I don't mean the
answers, Emily, of course not
just some little hint

EMILY Oh, I think *hints* are allowed
—So-ah—if you get stuck, George,
you whistle to me, and I'll give you
some hints

GEORGE Emily, you're just naturally
bright, I guess

EMILY I figure that it's just the way
a person's born

GEORGE Yeah But, you see, I want
to be a farmer, and my Uncle Luke
says whenever I'm ready I can come
over and work on his farm and if I'm
any good I can just gradually have it

EMILY You mean the house and
everything?
(Enter MRS WEBB)

GEORGE Yeah Well, thanks I
better be getting out to the baseball
field Thanks for the talk, Emily —
Good afternoon, Mrs Webb

MRS WEBB Good afternoon, George

GEORGE So-long, Emily

EMILY So-long, George

MRS WEBB Emily, come and help
me string these beans for the winter
George Gibbs let himself have a real
conversation, didn't he? Why, he's
growing up How old would George
be?

EMILY I don't know

MRS WEBB Let's see He must be
almost sixteen

EMILY Mama, I made a speech in
class today and I was very good

MRS WEBB You must recite it to
your father at supper What was it
about?

EMILY The Louisiana Purchase It
was like silk off a spool I'm going to
make speeches all my life —Mama,
are these big enough?

MRS WEBB Try and get them a little bigger if you can

EMILY Mama, will you answer me a question, serious?

MRS WEBB Seriously, dear—not serious

EMILY Seriously,—will you?

MRS WEBB Of course, I will

EMILY Mama, am I good-looking?

MRS WEBB Yes, of course you are All my children have got good features, I'd be ashamed if they hadn't

EMILY Oh, Mama, that's not what I mean What I mean is am I pretty?

MRS WEBB I've already told you, yes Now that's enough of that You have a nice young pretty face I never heard of such foolishness

EMILY Oh, Mama, you never tell us the truth about anything

MRS WEBB I am telling you the truth

EMILY Mama, were you pretty?

MRS WEBB Yes, I was, if I do say it I was the prettiest girl in town next to Mamie Cartwright

EMILY But, Mama, you've got to say something about me Am I pretty enough to get anybody to get people interested in me?

MRS WEBB Emily, you make me tired Now stop it You're pretty enough for all normal purposes Come along now and bring that bowl with you

EMILY Oh, Mama, you're no help at all

STAGE MANAGER Thank you Thank you! That'll do We'll have to interrupt again here Thank you, Mrs Webb, thank you, Emily (MRS. WEBB and EMILY withdraw) There are some more things we've got to explore about this town This time we're going to go about it in another way we're going to look back on it from the future I'm not going to tell you what became of these two families we're seeing most of, because the rest of the play will tell you about them But take some of these others Take Joe Crowell, Jr Joe was a very bright fellow He graduated with honors and got a scholarship to Boston Tech,—MIT, that is But the War broke out and Joe died in France All that education for nothing Howie Newsome's still delivering milk at Grover's Corners He's an old man now, has a lot of help, but he still delivers it himself Says he gets the feel of the town that way Carries all the accounts in his head, never has to write down a word Mr Morgan's drug store ain't the same,—it's all citified Mr Morgan retired and went out to live in San Diego, California, where his daughter married a real estate man, name of Kerby Mr Morgan died there in 1935 and was buried in a lot of palm trees. Kinda lost his religion at the end and took up New Thought or something They read some new-fangled poetry over him and cremated him The New Hampshire in him sort of broke down in him in that climate, seems like The Cartwrights got richer and richer The house is closed most of the year They're off eating big dinners in hotels now,—in Virginia Hot Springs and Miami Beach They say the winters are cold here I see where

they've become 'Piscopahans. The Cartwright interests have just begun building a new bank in Grover's Corners—had to go to Vermont for the marble, sorry to say. And they've asked a friend of mine what they should put in the cornerstone for people to dig up a thousand years from now. Of course, they've put in a copy of the *New York Times* and a copy of Mr Webb's *Sentinel*. We're kind of interested in this because some scientific fellas have found a way of painting all that reading matter with a kind of glue—silicate glue—that'll make it keep a thousand—two thousand years. We're putting in a Bible and the Constitution of the United States and a copy of William Shakespeare's plays. What do you say, folks? What do you think? Y'know—Babylon once had two million people in it, and all we know about 'em is the names of the kings and some copies of wheat contracts and the sales of slaves. Yet, every night all those families sat down to supper, and the father came home from his work, and the smoke went up the chimney,—same as here. And even in Greece and Rome, all we know about the real life of the people is what we can piece together out of the joking poems and the comedies they wrote for the theater back then. So I'm going to have a copy of this play put in the cornerstone and the people a thousand years from now'll know a few simple facts about us—more than the Treaty of Versailles and the Lindbergh flight. See what I mean? Well,—you people a thousand years from now,—in the provinces north of New York at the beginning of the Twentieth Century, people eat three times a day soon after sunrise, at noon, and at sunset. Every seventh day, by law and by religion, was a day of rest and all

work come to a stop. The religion at that time was Christianity. I guess you have some other records about Christianity. The domestic set-up was marriage, a binding relation between a male and one female that lasted for life. Christianity strictly forbade killing, but you were allowed to kill animals, and you were allowed to kill human beings in war and government punishings. I guess we don't have to tell you about the government and business forms, because that's the kind of thing people seem to hand down first of all. Let me see now if there's anything else. Oh, yes,—at death people were buried in the ground just as they are. So, friends, this is the way we were in our growing up and in our marrying and in our doctoring and in our living and in our dying. Now we'll return to our day in Grover's Corners. A lot of time has gone by. It's evening. You can hear choir practice going on in the Congregational Church. All the children are at home doing their school work. The day is running down like a tired clock.

(A choir partially concealed in the orchestra pit has begun singing "Blessed be the tie that binds." SIMON STIMSON stands directing them. Two ladders have been pushed on to the stage, they serve as indication of the second story in the Gibbs and Webb houses. GEORGE and EMILY mount them, and apply themselves to their school work. DR. GIBBS has entered and is seated in his kitchen reading.)

SIMON STIMSON Now look here, everybody. Music come into the world to give pleasure—Softer! Softer! Get it out of your heads that music's only good when it's loud. You leave loudness to the Methodists. You couldn't beat 'em, even if you wanted to. Now again. Tenors!

GEORGE. Hsst! Emily!

EMILY Hello

GEORGE Hello!

EMILY I can't work at all The moonlight's so *terrible*

GEORGE Emily, did you get the third problem?

EMILY Which?

GEORGE The *third*?

EMILY Why, yes, George—that's the easiest of them all

GEORGE I don't see it Emily, can you give me a hint?

EMILY I'll tell you one thing the answer's in yards

GEORGE "In yards? How do you mean?

EMILY In *square* yards

GEORGE Oh . in square yards

EMILY Yes, George, don't you see?

GEORGE Yeah

EMILY In square yards of *wallpaper*

GEORGE Wallpaper,—oh, I see Thanks a lot, Emily

EMILY You're welcome My, isn't the moonlight *terrible*? And choir practice going on—I think if you hold your breath you can hear the train all the way to Contookuck Hear it?

GEORGE M-m-m—What do you know!

EMILY Well, I guess I better go back and try to work.

GEORGE Good night, Emily. And thanks

EMILY Good night, George.

SIMON STIMSON Before I forget it: how many of you will be able to come in Tuesday afternoon and sing at Fred Hersey's wedding?—show your hands That'll be fine, that'll be right nice We'll do the same music we did for Jane Trowbridge's last month—Now we'll do "Art thou weary, art thou languid?" It's a question, ladies and gentlemen, make it talk Ready

DR GIBBS Oh, George, can you come down a minute?

GEORGE Yes, Pa (*He descends the ladder*)

DR GIBBS Make yourself comfortable, George, I'll only keep you a minute George, how old are you?

GEORGE I? I'm sixteen, almost seventeen

DR GIBBS What do you want to do after school's over?

GEORGE Why, you know, Pa, I want to be a farmer on Uncle Luke's farm.

DR GIBBS You'll be willing, will you, to get up early and milk and feed the stock and you'll be able to hose and hay all day?

GEORGE. Sure, I will What are you . . what do you mean, Pa?

DR GIBBS Well, George, while I was in my office today I heard a funny

sound . . . and what do you think it was? It was your mother chopping wood. There you see your mother—getting up early, cooking meals all day long, washing and ironing,—and still she has to go out in the back yard and chop wood. I suppose she just got tired of asking you. She just gave up and decided it was easier to do it herself. And you eat her meals, and put on the clothes she keeps nice for you, and you run off and play baseball,—like she's some hired girl we keep around the house but that we don't like very much. Well, I knew all I had to do was call your attention to it. Here's a handkerchief, son. George, I've decided to raise your spending money twenty-five cents a week. Not, of course, for chopping wood for your mother, because that's a present you give her, but because you're getting older—and I imagine there are lots of things you must find to do with it.

GEORGE Thanks, Pa

DR GIBBS Let's see—tomorrow's pay day. You can count on it—Hmm. Probably Rebecca'll feel she ought to have some more too. Wonder what could have happened to your mother. Choir practice never was as late as this before.

GEORGE It's only half-past eight, Pa

DR GIBBS I don't know why she's in that old choir. She hasn't any more voice than an old crow. Traipsin' around the streets at this hour of the night. Just about time you retired, don' you think?

GEORGE Yes, Pa (GEORGE mounts to his place on the ladder. Laughter and good nights can be heard on stage left and presently MRS GIBBS, MRS SOAMES and MRS WEBB come down

Main Street. When they arrive at the center of the stage they stop.)

MRS SOAMES Good night, Martha. Good night, Mr. Foster.

MRS WEBB I'll tell Mr. Webb, I know he'll want to put it in the paper.

MRS GIBBS My, it's late!

MRS SOAMES Good night, Irma.

MRS GIBBS Real nice choir practice, wa'n't it? Myrtle Webb! Look at that moon, will you! Tsk-tsk-tsk. Potato weather, for sure.

MRS SOAMES Naturally I didn't want to say a word about it in front of those others, but now we're alone—really, it's the worst scandal that ever was in this town!

MRS GIBBS What?

MRS SOAMES Simon Stimson!

MRS GIBBS Now, Louella!

MRS SOAMES But, Julia! To have the organist of a church drunk and drunk year after year. You know he was drunk tonight.

MRS GIBBS Now, Louella! We all know about Mr. Stimson, and we all know about the troubles he's been through, and Dr. Ferguson knows too, and if Dr. Ferguson keeps him on there in his job the only thing the rest of us can do is just not to notice it.

MRS SOAMES Not to notice it! But it's getting worse.

MRS WEBB No, it isn't, Louella It's getting better I've been in that choir twice as long as you have It doesn't happen anywhere near so often My, I hate to go to bed on a night like this—I better hurry Those children'll be sitting up till all hours Good night, Louella (*She hurries downstage, enters her house and disappears*)

MRS GIBBS Can you get home safe, Louella?

MRS SOAMES It's as bright as day I can see Mr Soames scowling at the window now You'd think we'd been to a dance the way the menfolk carry on (*Repeated good nights* MRS GIBBS arrives at her home)

MRS GIBBS Well, we had a real good time

DR GIBBS You're late enough

MRS GIBBS Why, Frank, it ain't any later 'n usual

DR GIBBS And you stopping at the corner to gossip with a lot of hens

MRS GIBBS Now, Frank, don't be grouchy Come out and smell my heliotrope in the moonlight (*They stroll out arm in arm along the footlights*) Isn't that wonderful? What did you do all the time I was away?

DR GIBBS Oh, I read—as usual What were the girls gossiping about tonight?

MRS GIBBS Well, believe me, Frank—there is something to gossip about

DR GIBBS Hurrn! Simon Stimson far gone, was he?

MRS GIBBS Worst I've ever seen him How'll that end, Frank? Dr Ferguson can't forgive him forever

DR GIBBS I guess I know more about Simon Stimson's affairs than anybody in this town Some people ain't made for small town life I don't know how that'll end, but there's nothing we can do but just leave it alone Come, get in

MRS GIBBS No, not yet Oh, Frank, I'm worried about you

DR GIBBS What are you worried about?

MRS GIBBS I think it's my duty to make plans for you to get a real rest and change And if I get that legacy, well, I'm going to insist on it

DR GIBBS Now, Julia, there's no sense in going over that again

MRS GIBBS Frank, you're just unreasonable!

DR GIBBS Come on, Julia, it's getting late First thing you know you'll catch cold I gave George a piece of my mind tonight I reckon you'll have your wood chopped for a while anyway No, no, start getting upstairs

MRS GIBBS Oh, dear There's a ways so many things to pick up, seems like You know, Frank, Mrs. Fairchild always locks her front door every night All those people up that part of town do

DR GIBBS They're all getting cified, that's the trouble with them They haven't got nothing fit to burgle and everybody knows it (*They dis*

appear REBECCA climbs up the ladder beside GEORGE)

GEORGE Get out, Rebecca There's only room for one at this window You're always spoiling everything

REBECCA Well, let me look just a minute

GEORGE Use your own window

REBECCA I did, but there's no moon there George, do you know what I think, do you? I think maybe the moon's getting nearer and nearer and there'll be a big 'splosion

GEORGE Rebecca, you don't know anything If the moon were getting nearer, the guys that sit up all night with telescopes would see it first and they'd tell about it, and it'd be in all the newspapers

REBECCA George, is the moon shining on South America, Canada and half the whole world?

GEORGE Well—prob'ly is
(*The STAGE MANAGER strolls on*)

STAGE MANAGER Nine-thirty Most of the lights are out No, there's Constable Warren trying a few doors on Main Street And here comes Editor Webb, after putting his newspaper to bed

MR WEBB Good evening, Bill

CONSTABLE WARREN Evenin', Mr Webb

MR WEBB Quite a moon!

CONSTABLE WARREN Yepp

MR WEBB All quiet tonight?

CONSTABLE WARREN. *Simon Stimson* is rollin' around a little Just saw his wife movin' out to hunt for him so I looked the other way—there he is now

(*SIMON STIMSON comes down Main Street from the left, only a trace of unsteadiness in his walk*)

MR WEBB Good evening, Simon . Town seems to have settled down for the night pretty well (*SIMON STIMSON comes up to him and pauses a moment*) Good evening Yes, most of the town's settled down for the night, Simon I guess we better do the same Can I walk along a ways with you? (*SIMON STIMSON continues on his way without a word and disappears at the right*) Good night

CONSTABLE WARREN I don't know how that's goin' to end, Mr Webb

MR WEBB Well, he's seen a peck of trouble, one thing after another Oh, Bill if you see my boy smoking cigarettes, just give him a word, will you? He thinks a lot of you, Bill

CONSTABLE WARREN I don't think he smokes no cigarettes, Mr Webb Leastways, not more'n two or three a year He don't belong to that crowd that hangs out down by the gully

MR WEBB Hm I hope not— Well, good night, Bill

CONSTABLE WARREN Good night, Mr Webb (*Exit*)

MR WEBB Who's that up there? Is that you, Myrtle?

EMILY No, it's me, Papa

MR WEBB. Why aren't you in bed?

EMILY I don't know I just can't sleep yet, Papa The moonlight's so wonderful And the smell of Mrs Gibbs's heliotrope Can you smell it?

MR WEBB Hm Yes Haven't any troubles on your mind, have you, Emily?

EMILY Troubles, Papa No

MR WEBB Well, enjoy yourself, but don't let your mother catch you Good night, Emily

EMILY Good night, Papa
(MR WEBB crosses into the house, whistling "Blessed Be the Tie that Binds" and disappears)

REBECCA I never told you about that letter Jane Crofut got from her minister when she was sick The minister of her church in the town she was in before she came here He wrote Jane a letter and on the envelope the ad-

dress was like this It said Jane Crofut, The Crofut Farm, Grover's Corners, Sutton County, New Hampshire, United States of America

GEORGE What's funny about that?

REBECCA But listen, it's not finished, the United States of America, Continent of North America, Western Hemisphere, the Earth, the Solar System, the Universe, the Mind of God,—that's what it said on the envelope

GEORGE What do you know!

REBECCA And the postman brought it just the same

GEORGE What do you know!

STAGE MANAGER That's the end of the First Act, friends You can go and smoke now, those that smoke

ACT TWO

The tables and chairs of the two kitchens are still on the stage

The ladders have been withdrawn

The STAGE MANAGER has been at his accustomed place watching the audience return to its seats

STAGE MANAGER Three years have gone by Yes, the sun's come up over a thousand times Summers and winters have cracked the mountains a little bit more and the rains have brought down some of the dirt Some babies that weren't even born before have begun talking regular sentences already, and a number of people

who thought they were right young and spry have noticed that they can't bound up a flight of stairs like they used to, without their heart fluttering a little Some older sons are sitting at the head of the table, and some people I know are having their meat cut up for them —All that can happen in a thousand days Nature's

been pushing and contriving in other ways, too a number of young people fell in love and got married Yes, the mountain got bit away a few fractions of an inch, millions of gallons of water went by the mill, and here and there a new home was set up under a roof Almost everybody in the world gets married,—you know what I mean? In our town there aren't hardly any exceptions Most everybody in the world climbs into their graves married The First Act was called the Daily Life This Act is called Love and Marriage There's another Act coming after this I reckon you can guess what that's about So It's three years later It's 1904 It's July 7th, just after High School Commencement That's the time most of our young people jump up and get married Soon as they've passed their last examinations in solid geometry and Cicero's Orations, looks like they suddenly feel themselves fit to be married It's early morning Only this time it's been raining It's been pouring and thundering Mrs Gibbs's garden, and Mrs Webb's here drenched All those bean poles and pea vines drenched All yesterday over there on Main Street, the rain looked like curtains being blown along Hm it may begin again any minute There! You can hear the 5 45 for Boston And here comes Howie Newsome delivering the milk And there's Si Crowell delivering the papers like his brother before him—You remember about his brother?—all that education he's going to get and that'll be wasted And there's Mrs Gibbs and Mrs Webb come down to make breakfast, just as though it were an ordinary day I don't have to point out to the women in my audience that those ladies they see before them, both those ladies cooked three meals

a day,—one of 'em for twenty years, the other for forty,—and no summer vacation They brought up two children apiece, washed, cleaned the house,—and never a nervous breakdown Never thought themselves hard-used, either It's like what one of those Middle West poets said You've got to love life to have life, and you've got to have life to love life It's what they call a vicious circle

(SI CROWELL has entered hurling imaginary newspapers into doorways, HOWIE NEWSOME has come along Main Street with BESSIE)

HOWIE NEWSOME Git-ap, Bessie

SI CROWELL Morning, Howie

HOWIE NEWSOME Morning, Si—Anything in the papers I ought to know?

SI CROWELL Nothing much, except we're losing about the best baseball pitcher Grover's Corners ever had

HOWIE NEWSOME Reckon he was He's been standing off the whole of South New Hampshire single-handed, looks like

SI CROWELL He could hit and run bases, too

HOWIE NEWSOME Yep Mighty fine ball player—Bessie! I guess I can stop and talk if I've a mind to!

SI CROWELL I don't see how he could give up a thing like that just to get married Would you, Howie?

HOWIE NEWSOME Can't tell, Si. Never had no talent that way (CONSTABLE WARREN enters They exchange mornings) You're up early, Bill

CONSTABLE WARREN Seein' if there's anything I can do to prevent a flood River's been risin' all night

HOWIE NEWSOME Si Crowell's all worked up here about George Gibbs retirin' from baseball

CONSTABLE WARREN Yes, sir, that's the way it goes Back in '84 we had a player, Si,—even George Gibbs couldn't touch him Name of Hank Todd Went down to Maine and become a parson Wonderful ball player —Howie, how did the weather look to you?

HOWIE NEWSOME No, 'tain't bad Think maybe it'll clear up for good (CONSTABLE WARREN and SI CROWELL continue on their way HOWIE NEWSOME brings the milk first to MRS GIBBS's house She meets him by the trellis)

MRS GIBBS Good morning, Howie Do you think it's going to rain again?

HOWIE NEWSOME Morning, Mrs Gibbs It rained so heavy, I think maybe it'll clear up

MRS GIBBS Certainly hope it will.

HOWIE NEWSOME How much did you want today?

MRS GIBBS I guess I'll need three-a-milk and two-a-cream, Howie I'm going to have a house full of relations

HOWIE NEWSOME My wife says to tell you we both hope they'll be very happy, Mrs Gibbs Know they will.

MRS GIBBS Thanks a lot, Howie Tell your wife I hope she gits there to the wedding

HOWIE NEWSOME Yes, she'll be there, she'll be there if she kin (HOWIE NEWSOME crosses to MRS WEBB's house) Morning, Mrs Webb

MRS WEBB Oh, good morning, Mr Newsome I told you four quarts of milk, but I hope you can spare me another

HOWIE NEWSOME Yes'm and the two of cream

MRS WEBB Will it rain all day, Mr Newsome?

HOWIE NEWSOME No'm Just sayin' to Mrs Gibbs as how it may lighten up Mrs Newsome told me to tell you as how we hope they'll both be very happy, Mrs Webb Know they will

MRS WEBB Thank you, and thank Mrs Newsome and we hope to see you all at the wedding

HOWIE NEWSOME Yes, Mrs Webb We hope to git there Couldn't mis., that Chck! Bessie! (Exit HOWIE NEWSOME DR GIBBS descends in shirt sleeves, and sits down at his breakfast table)

DR GIBBS Well, Ma, the day has come You're losin' one of your chicks.

MRS GIBBS Frank Gibbs, don't you say another word I feel like crying every minute Sit down and drink your coffee

DR GIBBS The groom's up shaving himself Whistling and singing, like he's glad to leave us —Every now and then he says "I do" to the mirror, but it don't sound convincing to me

MRS. GIBBS. I declare I don't know how he'll get along I've arranged his clothes and seen to it he's put warm things on,—Frank! they're too young Emily won't think of such things He'll catch his death of cold within a week —Here's something I made for you

DR GIBBS. Why, Julia Hersey! French toast!

MRS. GIBBS. 'Tain't hard to make, and I had to do something

DR GIBBS. I remember my wedding morning, Julia

MRS. GIBBS. Now don't start that, Frank Gibbs I tell you I can't stand it

DR GIBBS. I was the scariest young fella in the State of New Hampshire I thought I'd made a mistake for sure And when I saw you comin' down that aisle I thought you were the prettiest girl I'd ever seen, but the only trouble was that I'd never seen you before There I was in the Congregational Church marryin' a total stranger

MRS. GIBBS. And how do you think I felt!—Did you hear Rebecca stirring about upstairs?

DR GIBBS. Only morning in the year she hasn't been managing everybody's business She's shut up in her room I got the impression that maybe she's crying

MRS. GIBBS. Good Lord! This has got to stop.—Rebecca! Rebecca! Everything's getting cold down here (GEORGE comes rattling down the stairs very brisk)

GEORGE. Good morning, everybody. Only five more hours to live (Makes the gesture of cutting his throat)

MRS. GIBBS. Where are you going?

GEORGE. Just stepping across the grass to see my girl

MRS. GIBBS. Now, George! You take an umbrella or I won't let you out of this house

GEORGE. Aw, Ma It's just a step!

MRS. GIBBS. From tomorrow on you can kill yourself in all weathers, but while you're in my house you live wisely, thank you There are your overshoes right there in the hall And here's an umbrella

GEORGE. Aw, Ma!

DR GIBBS. George, do as your mother tells you

MRS. GIBBS. Maybe Mrs Webb isn't used to callers at seven in the morning Take a cup-a coffee first

GEORGE. Be back in a minute (He crosses the stage, leaping over the puddles) Good morning, Mother Webb

MRS. WEBB. Goodness! You frightened me!—Now, George, you can come in a minute out of the wet, but you know I can't ask you in

GEORGE. Why not—?

MRS. WEBB. George, you know's well as I do the groom can't see his bride on his wedding day, not until he sees her in church

GEORGE. Aw!—that's just a superstition

(Enter MR WEBB)

MR. WEBB Good morning, George

GEORGE Mr Webb, you don't believe in that superstition, do you?

MR WEBB There's a lot of common sense in some superstitions, George

MRS WEBB Millions have folla'd it, George, and you don't want to be the first to fly in the face of custom

GEORGE How is Emily?

MRS WEBB She hasn't waked up yet. I haven't heard a sound out of her

GEORGE Emily's asleep!!!

MRS WEBB No wonder! We were up till all hours,—sewing and packing I'll tell you what I'll do, you set down here a minute with Mr Webb and drink this cup of coffee, and I'll go upstairs and see she doesn't come down and surprise you There's some bacon, too, but don't be long about it

(Exit MRS WEBB Embarrassed silence)

MR WEBB Well, George, how are you?

GEORGE Oh, fine I'm fine (Pause) Mr Webb, what sense could there be in a superstition like that?

MR WEBB Well, you see,—on her wedding morning a girl's head's apt to be full of clothes and things like that Don't you think that's probably it?

GEORGE Ye-es. I never thought of that

MR WEBB A girl's apt to be a mite nervous on her wedding day (Pause.)

GEORGE I wish a fellow could get married without all that marching up and down

MR WEBB Well, every man that's ever lived has felt that way about it, George, but it hasn't done much good It's the women that have built up weddings, my boy From now on they have it pretty much as they like All those good women standing shoulder to shoulder making sure that the knot's tied in a mighty public way

GEORGE But you believe in it, don't you, Mr Webb?

MR WEBB Oh, yes, oh, yes Don't you misunderstand me, my boy Marriage is a wonderful thing,—wonderful thing And don't you forget that, George

GEORGE No, sir—Mr Webb, how old were you when you got married?

MR WEBB Well, you see I'd been to college and I'd taken a little time to get settled But Mrs Webb,—she wasn't much older than what Emily is Oh, age hasn't much to do with it, George,—not compared to other things

GEORGE What were you going to say, Mr Webb?

MR WEBB Oh, I don't know,—was I going to say something? (Pause) George, I was thinking the other night of some advice my father gav-

me when I got married Charles, he said, Charles, start out early showing who's boss, he said Best thing to do is to give an order, even if it don't make sense, just so she'll learn to obey And he said if anything about your wife irritates you,—her conversation, or anything,—just get up and leave the house That'll make it clear to her, he said And, oh, yes! he said never, *never* let your wife know how much money you have, never

GEORGE Well, Mr Webb I don't think I could

MR WEBB So I took the opposite of my father's advice and I've been happy ever since And let that be a lesson to you, George, never to ask advice on personal matters,— George, are you going to raise chickens on your farm?

GEORGE What?

MR WEBB Are you going to raise chickens on your farm?

GEORGE Uncle Luke's never been much interested, but I thought—

MR WEBB A book came into my office the other day, George, on the Philo System of raising chickens I want you to read it I'm thinking of beginning in a small way in the back yard, and I'm going to put an incubator in the cellar—
(Enter MRS. WEBB)

MRS WEBB Charles, are you talking about that old incubator again? I thought you two'd be talking about things worth while

MR. WEBB Well, Myrtle, if you want to give the boy some good advice, I'll

go upstairs and leave you alone with him

MRS WEBB Now, George, I'm sorry, but I've got to send you away so that Emily can come down and get some breakfast She told me to tell you that she sends you her love but that she doesn't want to lay eyes on you So good-by, George
(GEORGE crosses the stage to his own home and disappears)

MR WEBB Myrtle, I guess you don't know about that older superstition

MRS WEBB What do you mean, Charles?

MR WEBB Since the cave-men the groom shouldn't be left alone with his father-in-law on the day of the wedding, or near it Now don't forget that!

STAGE MANAGER Thank you Thank you, everybody Now I have to interrupt again here You see, we want to know how all this began,—this wedding, this plan to spend a lifetime together I'm awfully interested in how big things like that begin You know how it is you're twenty-one or twenty-two and you make some decisions, then whisssh! you're seventy you've been a lawyer for fifty years, and that white-haired lady at your side has eaten over fifty thousand meals with you How do such things begin? George and Emily are going to show you now the conversation they had when they first knew that . . . that . . . as the saying goes they were meant for one another But before they do it I want you to try and remember what it was like when you were young, when you were fifteen or sixteen For some reason it is very hard to

do those days when even the little things in life could be almost too exciting to bear And particularly the days when you were first in love, when you were like a person sleep-walking, and you didn't quite see the street you were in, and didn't quite hear everything that was said to you You're just a little bit crazy Will you remember that, please? Now they'll be coming out of High School at three o'clock George has just been elected President of the Junior Class, and as it's June, that means he'll be President of the Senior Class all next year And Emily's just been elected Secretary and Treasurer I don't have to tell you how important that is *(He places a board across the backs of two chairs, parallel to the footlights, and places two high stools behind it This is the counter of MR MORGAN'S drugstore)* All ready! *(EMILY, carrying an armful of—imaginary—school books, comes along Main Street from the left)*

EMILY I can't, Louise I've got to go home Good-by Oh, Ernestine! Ernestine! Can you come over tonight and do algebra? I did the first and third in Study Hall No, they're not hard But, Ernestine, that Caesar's awful hard I don't see why we have to do a thing like that Come over about seven Tell your mother you have to G'by G'by, Helen G'by, Fred *(GEORGE, also carrying books, catches up with her)*

GEORGE Can I carry your books home for you, Emily?

EMILY *(coldly)* Thank you *(She gives them to him)*

GEORGE Excuse me a minute, Emily —Say, Bob, get everything ready I'll

be there in a quarter of an hour If I'm a little late start practice anyway. And give Herb some long high ones His eye needs a lot of practice Seev later

EMILY Good-by, Lizzy

GEORGE Good-by, Lizzy —I'm awfully glad you were elected, too, Emily

EMILY Thank you *(They have been standing on Main Street, almost against the back wall GEORGE is about to take the first steps towards the audience when he stops again and says)*

GEORGE Emily, why are you mad at me?

EMILY I'm not mad at you

GEORGE You you treat me so funny

EMILY Well, I might as well say it right out, George I don't like the whole change that's come over you in the last year I'm sorry if that hurts your feelings, but I've just got to tell the truth and shame the devil

GEORGE I'm awfully sorry, Emily Wha-a-what do you mean?

EMILY Well, up to a year ago I used to like you a lot And I used to watch you as you did everything because we'd been friends so long and then you began spending all your time at baseball and you never even spoke to anybody any more, not even to your own family you didn't and, George, it's a fact, you've got awful conceited and stuck up, and all the girls say so They may not say so to your face, but that's

what they say about you behind your back, and it hurts me to hear them say it, but I've got to agree with them a little. I'm sorry if it hurts your feelings—but I can't be sorry I said it.

GEORGE I I'm glad you said it, Emily. I never thought that such a thing was happening to me. I guess it's hard for a fella not to have faults creep into his character.
(*They take a step or two in silence, then stand still in misery.*)

EMILY I always expect a man to be perfect and I think he should be.

GEORGE Oh I don't think it's possible to be perfect, Emily.

EMILY Well, my father is, and as far as I can see your father is. There's no reason on earth why you shouldn't be, too.

GEORGE Well, Emily I feel it's the other way round. That men aren't naturally good, but girls are. Like you and your mother and my mother.

EMILY Well, you might as well know right now that I'm not perfect. It's not as easy for a girl to be perfect as a man, because we girls are more nervous—Now I'm sorry I said all that about you. I don't know what made me say it.

GEORGE No, no,—I guess if it's the truth you ought to say it. You stick to it, Emily.

EMILY I don't know if it's the truth or not. And I suddenly feel that it isn't important at all.

GEORGE Emily, would you like an ice-cream soda, or something, before you go home?

EMILY Well, thank you. I would.
(*They come into the drugstore and seat themselves on the stools.*)

STAGE MANAGER (*as MR MORGAN*) Hello, George. Hello, Emily. What'll you have? Why, Emily Webb, what've you been crying about?

GEORGE (*he gropes for an explanation*) She she just got an awful scare, Mr Morgan. She almost got run over by that hardware store wagon. Everybody always says that Tom Huckins drives like a crazy man.

STAGE MANAGER Here, take a drink of water, Emily. You look all shook up. There!—Now, what'll you have?

EMILY I'll have a strawberry phosphate, thank you, Mr Morgan.

GEORGE No, no. You go and have an ice-cream soda with me, Emily—Two strawberry ice-cream sodas, Mr Morgan.

STAGE MANAGER (*working the faucets*) Yes, sir. I tell you, you've got to look both ways before you cross Main Street these days. Gets worse every year. There are a hundred and twenty-five horses in Grover's Corners this minute. I'm talking to you. State Inspector was in here yesterday. And now they're bringing in these auto-mo-biles, the best thing to do is to just stay home. Why, I can remember the time when a dog could lie down all day in the middle of Main Street and nothing would come to disturb him—Yes, Miss Ellis, be with you in a minute. Here are your sodas. Enjoy 'em. (*He goes off.*)

EMILY They're so expensive.

GEORGE No, no,—don't you think of that We're celebrating First, we're celebrating our election And then do you know what else I'm celebrating?

EMILY No

GEORGE I'm celebrating because I've got a friend who tells me all the things that ought to be told me

EMILY George, *please* don't think of that I don't know why I said it It's not true You're—

GEORGE No, you stick to it, Emily I'm glad you spoke to me like you did But you'll see I'm going to change so quick—you bet I'm going to change And, Emily, I want to ask you a favor

EMILY What?

GEORGE Emily, if I go away to State Agriculture College next year, will you write me a letter once in a while?

EMILY I certainly will I certainly will, George (Pause) It certainly seems like being away three years you'd get out of touch with things

GEORGE No, no I mustn't do that You see I'm not only going to be just a farmer After a while maybe I'll run for something to get elected So your letters'll be very important to me, you know, telling me what's going on here and everything

EMILY Just the same, three years is a long time Maybe letters from Grover's Corners wouldn't be so interesting after a while Grover's Corners isn't a very important place when

you think of all New Hampshire; but I think it's a very nice town

GEORGE The day wouldn't come when I wouldn't want to know everything that's happening here I know *that's* true, Emily

EMILY Well, I'll try to make my letters interesting (Pause)

GEORGE Y'know, Emily, whenever I meet a farmer I ask him if he thinks it's important to go to Agriculture School to be a good farmer

EMILY Why, George—

GEORGE Yeah, and some of them say that it's even a waste of time You can get all those things, anyway, out of the pamphlets the government sends out And Uncle Luke's getting old,—he's about ready for me to start in taking over his farm tomorrow, if I could

EMILY My!

GEORGE And, like you say, being gone all that time in other places and meeting other people If anything like that can happen I don't want to go away I guess new people aren't any better than old ones I'll bet they almost never are Emily I feel that you're as good a friend as I've got I don't need to go and meet the people in other towns

EMILY But, George, maybe it's very important for you to go and learn all that about cattle-judging and soils and those things. And if you're going into politics, maybe you ought to meet people from other parts of the State of course, I don't know.

GEORGE (*after a pause*) Emily, I'm going to make up my mind right now I won't go I'll tell Pa about it tonight

EMILY Why, George, I don't see why you have to decide right now It's a whole year away

GEORGE Emily, I'm glad you spoke to me about that that fault in my character And what you said was right, but there was *one* thing wrong in it, and that was when you said that for a year I wasn't noticing people, and . . . you, for instance Listen, Emily you say you were watching me when I did everything Why, I was doing the same about you all the time Why, sure,—I always thought about you as one of the chief people I thought about I always made sure where you were sitting on the bleachers and who you were with And we've always had lots of talks and joking, in the halls, and they always meant a lot to me Of course, they weren't as good as the talk we're having now Lately I'd been noticing that you'd been acting kind of funny to me, and for three days I've been trying to walk home with you, but something's always got in the way Yesterday I was standing over against the wall waiting for you, and you walked home with Miss Corcoran

EMILY George! Life's awful funny! How could I have known that? Why, I thought—

GEORGE Listen, Emily, I'm going to tell you why I'm not going to Agriculture School I think that once you've found a person that you're very fond of I mean a person who's fond of you, too,—at least enough to be interested in your character Well, I think that's just as

important as college is, and even more so That's what I think

EMILY I think it's awfully important, too

GEORGE Emily

EMILY Yes, George

GEORGE Emily, if I improve and make a big change would you be I mean *could* you be

EMILY I I am now, I always have been

GEORGE (*pause*) So I guess this is an important talk we've been having

EMILY Yes

GEORGE (*takes a deep breath and straightens his back*) Wait just a minute and I'll take you home (*He rises and goes to the STAGE MANAGER who appears and comes toward him*) Mr Morgan, I'll have to go home and get the money to pay you for this It'll only take me a minute

STAGE MANAGER What's that? George Gibbs, do you mean to tell me—!

GEORGE Yes, but I had reasons, Mr Morgan —Look, here's my gold watch to keep until I come back with the money

STAGE MANAGER That's all right Keep your watch I'll trust you

GEORGE I'll be back in five minutes

STAGE MANAGER I'll trust you ten years, George,—not a day more —Got all over your shock, Emily?

EMILY Yes, thank you, Mr Morgan. It was nothing.

GEORGE (*taking up the books from the counter*) I'm ready. (*They walk in grave silence down the stage, turn, and pass through the trellis at the Webbs' back door and disappear*)

STAGE MANAGER Thank you, Emily. Thank you, George. Now before we go on to the wedding, there are still some more things we ought to know about this—about this marriage. I want to know some more about how the parents took it, but what I want to know most of all is—oh, you know what I mean,—what Grover's Corners thought about marriage anyway. You know's well as I do—people are never able to say right out what they think of money, or death, or fame, or marriage. You've got to catch it between the lines, you've got to over-hear it. Oh, Doctor! Mrs Gibbs! (*They appear at their side of the stage and exchange a glance of understanding with him*). The STAGE MANAGER lays the same plank across two chairs that served as a drugstore counter and it has now become MRS GIBBS's ironing board. DR GIBBS sits down in a rocker and smokes. MRS GIBBS irons a moment in silence, then goes to the foot of the stairs and calls.)

MRS GIBBS Rebecca! It's time you turned out your light and went to sleep. George, you'd better get some sleep, too.

REBECCA'S VOICE Ma, I haven't finished my English.

MRS GIBBS What? Well, I bet you haven't been working, Rebecca. You've been reading that Sears, Roe-

buck catalogue, that's what you've been doing—All right, I'll give you ten more minutes. If you haven't finished by then you'll just have to fail the course and be a disgrace to your father and me—George, what are you doing?

GEORGE'S VOICE (*hurt*) I'm doing history.

MRS GIBBS Well, you'd better go to bed. You're probably sleeping at the desk as it is. (*She casts an amused eye at her husband and returns to her ironing*.)

DR GIBBS I had a long talk with the boy today.

MRS GIBBS Did you?

DR GIBBS I tell you, Mrs G, there's nothing so terrifying in the world as a son. The relation of a father to a son is the damndest, awkwardest—I always come away feeling like a soggy sponge of hypocrisy.

MRS GIBBS Well, a mother and a daughter's no picnic, let me tell you.

DR GIBBS George is set on it. He wants to marry Emily 'soon as school's out and take her right on to the farm. (*Pause*). He says he can sit up nights and learn agriculture from government pamphlets, without going to college for it.

MRS GIBBS He always was crazy about farming. Gets that from my people.

DR GIBBS At a pinch, I guess he could start in farming,—but I swear I think he's too young to get married. Julia, he's just a green half-grown

Id He isn't ready to be a family man

MRS GIBBS No, he ain't You're right—But he's a good boy and I wouldn't like to think of him being alone out there coming into town Satiddy nights, like any old farm hand, tuckered out from work and looking for excitement He might get into bad ways It wouldn't be enough fun for him to come and sit by our stove,—and holding hands with Emily for a year mightn't be enough either He might lose interest in her

DR GIBBS Hm

MRS GIBBS Frank, I've been watching her George is a lucky boy when you think of all the silly girls in the world.

DR GIBBS But, Julia,—George married That great gangling selfish nincompoop

MRS GIBBS Yes, I know (*She takes up a collar and examines it*) Frank, what do you do to your collars? Do you gnaw 'em? I never saw such a man for collars

DR GIBBS Julia, when I married you, do you know what one of my terrors was in getting married?

MRS GIBBS Pshaw! Go on with you!

DR GIBBS I was afraid we weren't going to have material for conversation more'n 'Id last us a few weeks I was afraid we'd run out and eat our meals in silence, that's a fact You and I've been conversing for twenty years now without any noticeable barren spells

MRS GIBBS Well, good weather, bad weather, 'tain't very choice, but I always manage to find something to say
(Pause)

DR GIBBS What do you think? What do you think, Julia? Shall we tell the boy he can go ahead and get married?

MRS GIBBS Seems like it's up to us to decide Myrtle and Charles Webb are willing They think it's a good idea to throw the young people into the sea and let 'm sink or swim, as soon as they're ready

DR GIBBS What does that mean? Must we decide right now? This minute?

MRS GIBBS There you go putting the responsibility on me!

DR GIBBS Here it is, almost April—I'll go up and say a word to him right now before he goes to bed (*He rises*) You're sure, Julia? You've nothing more to add?

MRS GIBBS (*stops ironing a moment*) I don't know what to say Seems like it's too much to ask, for a big outdoor boy like that to go and get shut up in classrooms for three years And once he's on the farm, he might just as well have a companion, seeing he's found a fine girl like Emily People are meant to live two-by-two in this world Yes, Frank, go up and tell him it's all right

DR GIBBS (*crosses and is about to call when—*)

MRS GIBBS (*her hands on her cheeks, staring into the audience, in sharp alarm*) Wait a minute! Wait a

minute!—(Then resuming her ironing) No,—go and tell him

DR GIBBS. Why did you stop then, Julia?

MRS GIBBS Oh, you know I thought of all those times we went through in the first years when George and Rebecca were babies,—you walking up and down with them at three in the morning, the whooping-cough, the time George fell off the porch. You and I were twenty-five years old, and more. It's wonderful how one forgets one's troubles, like that—Yes, Frank, go upstairs and tell him. It's worth it

DR GIBBS Yes, they'll have a lot of troubles, but that's none of our business. Let'm. Everybody has a right to his own troubles—You ought to be present, Julia,—important occasion like that. I'll call him—George! Oh, George!

GEORGE'S VOICE Yes, Pa

DR GIBBS Can you come down a minute? Your mother and I want to speak to you

GEORGE Yeah, sure

MRS GIBBS (putting her arm through her husband's) Lord, what a fool I am. I'm trembling all over. There's nothing to tremble about

STAGE MANAGER Thank you! Thank you! Now we're ready to go on with the wedding. (While he talks, the actors remove the chair and tables and trellises from the Gibbs and Webb homes. They arrange the pews for the church in the back of the stage. The congregation will sit facing the back wall. The aisle of the church is

in the middle of the scene. A small platform is placed against the back wall on which the STAGE MANAGER as MINISTER can stand.) There are a lot of things to be said about a wedding, there are a lot of thoughts that go on during a wedding. We can't get them all into one wedding, naturally, and especially not into a wedding at Grover's Corners where they're awfully plain and short. In this wedding I play the minister. That gives me the right to say a few more things about it. For a while now, the play gets pretty serious. Y'see, some churches say that marriage is a sacrament. I don't quite know what that means, but I can guess. Like Mrs Gibbs said a few minutes ago. People were made to live two-by-two. This is a good wedding, but people are so put together that even at a good wedding there's a lot of confusion way down deep in people's minds and we thought that that ought to be in our play, too. The real hero of this scene isn't on the stage at all, and you know who that is. It's like what one of those European fellas said every child born into the world is Nature's attempt to make a perfect human being. Well, we've seen Nature pushing and contriving for some time now. We all know that nature's interested in quantity, but I think she's interested in quality, too,—that's why I'm in the ministry—Maybe she's trying to make another good governor for New Hampshire. And don't forget the other witnesses at this wedding,—the ancestors. Millions of them. Most of them set out to live two-by-two, also. Millions of them. Well, that's all my sermon. 'Twan't very long, anyway. (The organ starts playing Handel's "Largo".) The congregation streams into the church and sits in silence. MRS WEBB, on the way to her place,

turns back and speaks to the audience)

MRS WEBB I don't know why on earth I should be crying I suppose there's nothing to cry about It came over me at breakfast this morning, there was Emily eating her breakfast as she's done for seventeen years and now she's going off to eat it in someone else's house I suppose that's it And Emily! She suddenly said I can't eat another mouthful, and she put her head down on the table and she cried *(She starts toward her seat in the church, but turns back and adds)* Oh, I've got to say it you know, there's something downright cruel about sending our girls out into marriage this way I hope some of her girl friends have told her a thing or two It's cruel, I know, but I couldn't bring myself to say anything I went into it blind as a bat myself The whole world's wrong, that's what's the matter There they come *(She hurries to her place in the pew)* GEORGE starts to come down the right aisle of the theatre, through the audience Suddenly three members of his baseball team appear by the right proscenium pillar and start whistling and catcalling to him *(They are dressed for the ball field)*

THE BASEBALL PLAYERS Eh, George, George! Hsst—yaow! If things don't go right, call us in We know what to do Eh, fellas? Yaow! George, don't look so innocent, you old geezer We know what you're thinking Don't disgrace the team, big boy Whoooooo

STAGE MANAGER. All right! All right! That'll do That's enough of that *(Smiling, he pushes them off the stage)* They lean back to shout a few

more catcalls) There used to be an awful lot of that kind of thing at weddings in the old days,—Rome, and later We're more civilized now,—so they say *(The choir starts singing "Love divine, all love excelling—"* GEORGE has reached the stage He stares at the congregation a moment, then takes a few steps of withdrawal, toward the right proscenium pillar)

GEORGE *(darkly, to himself)* I wish I were back at school I don't want to get married *(His mother has left her seat and comes toward him She stops, looking at him anxiously)*

MRS GIBBS George, what's the matter?

GEORGE Ma, I don't want to grow old Why's everybody pushing me so?

MRS GIBBS Why, George you wanted it

GEORGE Why do I have to get married at all? Listen, Ma, for the last time I ask you—

MRS GIBBS No, no, George you're a man now

GEORGE Listen, Ma, you never listen to me All I want to do is to be a fella why do—

MRS GIBBS George! If anyone should hear you! Now stop Why, I'm ashamed of you!

GEORGE *(passing his hand over his forehead)* What's the matter? I've been dreaming Where's Emily?

MR. GIBBS Gracious! You gave me such a turn

GEORGE Cheer up, Ma What are you looking so funny for? Cheer up, I'm getting married

MRS GIBBS Let me catch my breath a minute

GEORGE Now, Ma, you save Thursday nights Emily and I are coming over to dinner every Thursday night you'll see Ma, what are you crying for? Come on, we've got to get ready for this

(In the meantime, EMILY, in white and wearing her wedding veil, has come through the audience and mounted on to the stage She too draws back when she sees the congregation in the church The choir begins "Blessed be the tie that binds")

EMILY I never felt so alone in my whole life And George over there, looking so ' I hate him I wish I were dead Papa! Papa!

MR WEBB *(leaves his seat in the pews and comes toward her anxiously)* Emily! Emily! Now don't get upset

EMILY But, Papa,—I don't want to get married

MR WEBB Sh-sh—Emily Everything's all right

EMILY Why can't I stay for a while just as I am? Let's go away

MR WEBB No, no, Emily Now stop and think

EMILY Don't you remember that you used to say,—all the time you used to say that I was your girl There must be lots of places we can go to Let's go away I'll work for you I could keep house

MR WEBB Sh You mustn't think of such things You're just nervous, Emily Now, now,—you're marrying the best young fellow in the world George is a fine fellow

EMILY But, Papa,—

MR WEBB George! George! *(MRS GIBBS returns to her seat GEORGE hears MR WEBB and looks up MR WEBB beckons to him They move to the center of the stage)* I'm giving away my daughter, George Do you think you can take care of her?

GEORGE Mr Webb, I want to I want to try Emily, I'm going to do my best I love you, Emily I need you

EMILY Well, if you love me, help me All I want is someone to love me

GEORGE I will, Emily

EMILY If ever I'm sick or in trouble, that's what I mean

GEORGE Emily, I'll try I'll try

EMILY And I mean for ever Do you hear? For ever and ever *(They fall into each other's arms. The March from "Lohengrin" is heard)*

MR WEBB Come, they're waiting for us Now you know it'll be all right Come, quick

(GEORGE slips away and takes his place beside the STAGE MANAGER—CLERGYMAN EMILY proceeds up the aisle on her father's arm)

STAGE MANAGER Do you, George, take this woman, Emily, to be your wedded wife, to have *(MRS SOAMES has been sitting in the last row of the congregation She now turns to her neighbors and in a shrill voice says)*

MRS SOAMES Perfectly lovely wedding! Loveliest wedding I ever saw Oh, I do love a good wedding, don't you? Doesn't she make a lovely bride?

GEORGE I do

STAGE MANAGER Do you, Emily, take this man, George, to be your wedded husband,—

MRS SOAMES Don't know when I've seen such a lovely wedding But I always cry Don't know why it is, but I always cry. I just like to see young people happy, don't you? Oh, I think it's lovely

(The ring The kiss The stage is suddenly arrested into silent tableau The STAGE MANAGER, his eyes on the distance, says to the audience) I've married two hundred couples in my day Do I believe in it? I don't know M marnes N millions of them The cottage, the go-cart, the Sunday afternoon drives in

the Ford, the first rheumatism, the grandchildren, the second rheumatism, the deathbed, the reading of the will—Once in a thousand times it's interesting Well, let's have Mendelssohn's "Wedding March"! (The organ picks up the March The bride and groom come down the aisle, radiant, but trying to be very dignified)

MRS SOAMES Aren't they a lovely couple? Oh, I've never been to such a nice wedding I'm sure they'll be happy I always say happiness, that's the great thing! The important thing is to be happy

(The bride and groom reach the steps leading into the audience A bright light is thrown upon them They descend into the auditorium and run up the aisle joyously)

STAGE MANAGER That's all the Second Act Ten minutes' intermission, folks

ACT THREE

During the intermission the audience has seen the actors arranging the stage On the right-hand side, a little right of the center, ten or twelve ordinary chairs have been placed in three openly spaced rows facing the audience

These are graves in the cemetery

Towards the end of the intermission the actors enter and take their places The front row contains toward the center of the stage, an empty chair, then MRS GIBBS, SIMON STIMSON The second row contains, among others, MRS SOAMES The third row has WALLY WEBB

The dead sit in a quiet without stiffness, and in a patience without listlessness

The STAGE MANAGER takes his accustomed place and waits for the house-lights to go down

STAGE MANAGER This time nine years have gone by, friends—summer, 1913 Gradual changes in Grover's

Corners Horses are getting rarer Farmers coming into town in Fords Chief difference is in the young peo-

ple, far as I can see 'They want to go to the moving pictures all the time 'They want to wear clothes like they see there . . . want to be citified 'Everybody locks their house doors now at night 'Ain't been any burglars in town yet, but everybody's heard about 'em 'But you'd be surprised though—on the whole, things don't change much at Grover's Corners 'Guess you want to know what all these chairs are here fur 'Smarter ones have guessed it already 'I don't know how you feel about such things, but this certainly is a beautiful place 'It's on a hilltop—a windy hilltop—lots of sky, lots of clouds,—often lots of sun and moon and stars 'You come up here on a fine afternoon and you can see range on range of hills—awful blue they are—up there by Lake Sunapee and Lake Winnepesaukee and way up, if you've got a glass, you can see the White Mountains and Mt Washington—where North Conway and Conway is 'And, of course, our favorite mountain, Mt Monadnock, 's right here—and all around it lie these towns—Jaffrey, 'n East Jaffrey, 'n Peterborough, 'n Dublin and (*Then pointing down in the audience*) there, quite a ways down, is Grover's Corners 'Yes, beautiful spot up here 'Mountain laurel and h-lacks 'I often wonder why people like to be buried in Woodlawn and Brooklyn when they might pass the same time up here in New Hampshire 'Over in that corner—(*Pointing to stage left*) are the old stones,—1670, 1680 'Strong-minded people that come a long way to be independent 'Summer people walk around there laughing at the funny words on the tombstones 'it don't do any harm 'And genealogists come up from Boston—get paid by city people for looking up their ancestors. 'They want to make sure they're

Daughb'ars of the American Revolution and of the *Mayflower* . . . Well, I guess that don't do any harm, either 'Wherever you come near the human race, there's layers and layers of nonsense 'Over there are some Civil War veterans too 'Iron flags on their graves 'New Hampshire boys had a notion that the Union ought to be kept together, though they'd never seen more than fifty miles of it themselves 'All they knew was the name, friends—the United States of America 'The United States of America 'And they went and died about it 'This here is the new part of the cemetery 'Here's your friend, Mrs Gibbs 'N let me see— 'Here's Mr Stimson, organist at the Congregational Church 'And over there's Mrs Soames who enjoyed the wedding so—you remember? 'Oh, and a lot of others 'And Editor Webb's boy, Wallace, whose appendix burst while he was on a Boy Scout trip to Crawford Notch 'Yes, an awful lot of sorrow has sort of quieted down up here 'People just wild with grief have brought their relatives up to this hill 'We all know how it is and then time and sunny days and rainy days 'n snow tz-tz-tz 'We're all glad they're in a beautiful place and we're coming up here ourselves when our fit's over 'This certainly is an important part of Grover's Corners 'A lot of thoughts come up here, night and day, but there's no post office 'Now I'm going to tell you some things you know already 'You know'm as well as I do, but you don't take'm out and look at'm very often 'I don't care what they say with their mouths—everybody knows that *something* is eternal 'And it ain't houses and it ain't names, and it ain't earth, and it ain't even the stars 'everybody knows in their bones that *some-*

thing is eternal, and that something has to do with human beings. All the greatest people ever lived have been telling us that for five thousand years and yet you'd be surprised how people are always losing hold of it. There's something way down deep that's eternal about every human being. (Pause) You know as well as I do that the dead don't stay interested in us living people for very long. Gradually, gradually, they let hold of the earth and the ambitions they had and the pleasures they had and the things they suffered and the people they loved. They get weaned away from earth—that's the way I put it,—weaned away. Yes, they stay here while the earth part of 'em burns away, burns out, and all that time they slowly get indifferent to what's goin' on in Grover's Corners. They're waitin'. They're waitin' for something that they feel is comin'. Something important and great. Aren't they waitin' for the eternal part in them to come out clear? Some of the things they're going to say maybe'll hurt your feelings—but that's the way it is: mother 'n daughter, husband 'n wife, enemy 'n enemy, money 'n miser, all those terribly important things kind of grow pale around here. And what's left? What's left when memory's gone, and your identity, Mrs. Smith? (He looks at the audience a minute, then turns to the stage) Well! There are some living people. There's Joe Stoddard, our undertaker, supervising a new-made grave. And here comes a Grover's Corners boy, that left town to go out West. (JOE STODDARD has hovered about in the background. SAM CRAIG enters left, wiping his forehead from the exertion. He carries an umbrella and strolls front.)

SAM CRAIG Good afternoon, Joe Stoddard.

JOE STODDARD Good afternoon, good afternoon. Let me see now, do I know you?

SAM CRAIG I'm Sam Craig.

JOE STODDARD Gracious sakes alive! Of all people! I should'a knowed you'd be back for the funeral. You've been away a long time, Sam.

SAM CRAIG Yes, I've been away over twelve years. I'm in business out in Buffalo now, Joe. But I was in the East when I got news of my cousin's death, so I thought I'd combine things a little and come and see the old home. You look well.

JOE STODDARD Yes, yes, can't complain. Very sad, our journey today, Samuel.

SAM CRAIG Yes.

JOE STODDARD Yes, yes. I always say, I hate to supervise when a young person is taken. I see you brought your umbrella. It's going to rain and make it sadder still, seems like. They'll be here in a few minutes now. I had to come here early today—my son's supervisin' at the home.

SAM CRAIG (reading stones) Old Farmer McCarty, I used to do chores for him—after school. He had the lumbago.

JOE STODDARD Yes, we brought Farmer McCarty here a number of years ago now.

SAM CRAIG (staring at MRS GIBBS' knees) Wh/, this is my Aunt Julia.

I'd forgotten that she'd . . .
of course, of course

JOE STODDARD Yes, Doc Gibbs lost his wife two-three years ago about this time And today's another pretty bad blow for him, too

MRS GIBBS (to SIMON STIMSON in an even voice) That's my sister Carey's boy, Sam Sam Craig

SIMON STIMSON I'm always uncomfortable when they're around

MRS GIBBS Simon

SIMON STIMSON They and their nonsense and their damned glee at being alive

MRS GIBBS Simon, be patient

SAM CRAIG Do they choose their own verses much, Joe?

JOE STODDARD No not usual
Mostly the bereaved pick a verse

SAM CRAIG Doesn't sound like Aunt Julia There aren't many of those Hersey sisters left now Let me see where are I wanted to look at my father's and mother's

JOE STODDARD Over there with the Craigs Avenue F

SAM CRAIG (reading SIMON STIMSON's epytaph) He was organist at church, wasn't he?—Hm, drank a lot, we used to say

JOE STODDARD Nobody was supposed to know about it He'd seen a peck of trouble Those musical fellas ain't like the rest of us, I reckon (*Behind his hand*) Took his own life, y' know?

SAM CRAIG Oh, did he?

JOE STODDARD Hung himself in the attic They tried to hush it up, but of course it got around His wife's just married Senator Barstow Many a time I've seen her, eleven o'clock at night, goin' around the streets huntin' for her husband Think o' that! Now she's married to Senator Barstow over at Manchester He chose his own epytaph You can see it there It ain't a verse exactly

SAM CRAIG Why, it's just some notes of music—what is it?

JOE STODDARD Oh, I wouldn't know It was wrote up in the Boston papers at the time

SAM CRAIG Joe, what did she die off?

JOE STODDARD Who?

SAM CRAIG My cousin

JOE STODDARD Oh, didn't you know? Had some trouble bringing a baby into the world Let's see, today's Friday—'twas almost a week ago now

SAM CRAIG (*putting up his umbrella*) Did the baby live?

JOE STODDARD (*raising his coat collar*) No 'Twas her second, though There's a little boy 'bout four years old

SAM CRAIG The grave's going to be over there?

JOE STODDARD Yes, there ain't much more room over here among the Gibbsses, so they're opening up a whole new Gibbs section over by Avenue B You'll excuse me now I see they're comin'

THE DEAD (*not lugubrious, and strongly New England in accent*)
 Rain'll do a lot of good—Yes, reckon things were gettin' downright parched Don't look like it's goin' to last long, though—Lemuel, you remember the floods of '79? Carried away all the bridges but one
 (*From left to right, at the back of the stage, comes a procession Four men carry a casket, invisible to us All the rest are under umbrellas One can vaguely see DR GIBBS, GEORGE, the WEBBS, etc They gather about a grave in the back center of the stage, a little to the left of center*)

MRS SOAMES Who is it, Julia?

MRS GIBBS (*without raising her eyes*) My daughter-in-law, Emily Webb

MRS SOAMES (*a little surprised, but no emotion*) Well, I declare! The road up here must have been awful muddy What did she die of, Julia?

MRS GIBBS In childbirth

MRS SOAMES Childbirth (*Almost with a laugh*) I'd forgotten all about that! My, wasn't life awful—(*With a sigh*) and wonderful?

SIMON STIMSON (*with a sideways glance*) Wonderful, was it?

MRS GIBBS Simon! Now, remember!

MRS SOAMES I remember Emily's wedding Wasn't it a lovely wedding? And I remember her reading the class poem at Graduation Exercises Emily was one of the brightest girls ever graduated from High School I've heard Principal Wilkins say so time after time I called on them at their

new farm, just before I died Perfectly beautiful farm

A WOMAN FROM AMONG THE DEAD.
 It's on the same road we lived on

A MAN AMONG THE DEAD Yes, just near the Elks' picnic grounds Remember, Joe? By the lake where we always used to go Fourth of July? Right smart farm
 (*They subside The group by the grave starts singing "Blessed be the tie that binds"*)

A WOMAN AMONG THE DEAD I always liked that hymn I was hopin' they'd sing a hymn

A MAN AMONG THE DEAD My wife—my second wife—knows all the verses of about every hymn there is It just beats the Dutch she can go through them all by heart.
 (*Pause Suddenly EMILY appears from among the umbrellas She is wearing a white dress Her hair is down her back and tied by a white ribbon like a little girl She comes slowly, gazing wonderingly at the dead, a little dazed She stops half-way and smiles faintly*)

EMILY Hello

VOICES AMONG THE DEAD Hello, Emily H'lo, M's Gibbs

EMILY Hello, Mother Gibbs

MRS GIBBS Emily

EMILY Hello (*The hymn continues EMILY looks back at the funeral She says dreamily*) It's raining

MRS GIBBS Yes They'll be gone soon, dear Just rest yourself

(*EMILY sits down in the empty chair by MRS GIBBS*)

EMILY It seems thousands and thousands of years since I How stupid they all look They don't have to look like that!

MRS GIBBS Don't look at them now, dear They'll be gone soon

EMILY Oh, I wish I'd been here a long time I don't like being new here—How do you do, Mr Stimson?

SIMON STIMSON How do you do, Emily?

(*EMILY continues to look about her with a wan and wondering smile, but for a moment her eyes do not return to the funeral group As though to shut out from her mind the thought of that group she starts speaking to MRS GIBBS with a touch of nervousness*)

EMILY Mother Gibbs, George and I have made that farm into just the best place you ever saw We thought of you all the time We wanted to show you the new barn and a great long ce-ment drinking fountain for the stock We bought that out of the money you left us.

MRS GIBBS I did?

EMILY Don't you remember, Mother Gibbs—the legacy you left us? Why, it was over three hundred and fifty dollars

MRS GIBBS Yes, yes, Emily

EMILY Well, there's a patent device on this drinking fountain so that it never overflows, Mother Gibbs, and it never sinks below a certain mark they have there It's fine (*Her voice*

trails off and her eyes return to the funeral group) It won't be the same to George without me, but it's a lovely farm (*Suddenly she looks directly at MRS GIBBS*) Live people don't understand, do they?

MRS GIBBS No, dear—not very much.

EMILY They're sort of shut up in little boxes, aren't they? I feel as though I knew them last a thousand years ago My boy is spending the day at Mrs Carter's (*She sees MR CARTER among the dead*) Oh Mr Carter, my little boy is spending the day at your house

MR CARTER Is he?

EMILY Yes, he loves it there—Mother Gibbs, we have a Ford, too Never gives any trouble I don't drive, though Mother Gibbs, when does this feeling go away?—Of being one of *them*? How long does it ?

MRS GIBBS Sh! dear Just wait and be patient

EMILY (*with a sigh*) I know—Look, they're finished They're going

MRS GIBBS Sh— (*The umbrella leave the stage DR GIBBS comes over to his wife's grave and stands before it a moment EMILY looks up at his face MRS GIBBS does not raise her eyes*)

EMILY Look! Father Gibbs is bringing some of my flowers to you He looks just like George, doesn't he? Oh, Mother Gibbs, I never realized before how troubled and how how in the dark live persons are. From morning till night, that's all they are—troubled (*DR GIBBS goes off*)

THE DEAD Little cooler than it was—Yes, that rain's cooled it off a little Those northeast winds always do the same thing, don't they? If it isn't a rain, it's a three-day blow—Reckon it may clear up before night, often does

(A patient calm falls on the stage The STAGE MANAGER appears at his proscenium pillar, smoking EMILY sits up abruptly with an idea)

EMILY But, Mother Gibbs, one can go back, one can go back there again into living I feel it I know it Why, just then for a moment I was thinking about about the farm and for a minute I was there, and my baby was on my lap as plain as day

MRS GIBBS Yes, of course you can

EMILY I can go back there and live all those days over again why not?

MRS GIBBS All I can say is, Emily, don't

EMILY (takes a few steps toward the STAGE MANAGER) But it's true, isn't it? I can go and live back there again

STAGE MANAGER Yes, some have tried—but they soon come back here

MRS GIBBS Don't do it, Emily

MRS SOAMES Emily, don't It's not what you think it'd be

EMILY But I won't live over a sad day I'll choose a happy one—I'll choose the day I first knew that I loved George Why should that be painful?

(They are silent Her question turns to the STAGE MANAGER)

STAGE MANAGER You not only live it, but you watch yourself living it.

EMILY Yes

STAGE MANAGER And as you watch it, you see the thing that they—down there—never know You see the future You know what's going to happen afterwards

EMILY But is that—painful? Why?

MRS GIBBS That's not the only reason why you shouldn't do it, Emily When you've been here longer you'll see that our life here is our hope that soon we'll forget all that, and think only of what's ahead, and be ready for what's ahead When you've been here longer you'll understand

EMILY (softly) But, Mother Gibbs, how can I ever forget that life? It's all I know It's all I had (MRS GIBBS does not answer) Mr Stimson, did you go back?

SIMON STIMSON (sharply) No

EMILY Did you, Mrs Soames?

MRS SOAMES Oh, Emily It isn't wise Really, it isn't All we can do is just warn you It won't be what you expect

EMILY (slowly) But it's a thing I must know for myself I'll choose a happy day, anyway

MRS GIBBS No At least, choose an unimportant day Choose the least important day in your life It will be important enough

EMILY (*to the STAGE MANAGER*) Then it can't be since I was married, or since the baby was born I can choose a birthday at least, can't I?—I choose my twelfth birthday

STAGE MANAGER All right February 11th, 1899 A Tuesday—Do you want any special time of day?

EMILY Oh, I want the whole day

STAGE MANAGER We'll begin at dawn You remember it had been snowing for several days, but it had stopped the night before, and they had begun clearing the roads The sun's coming up

EMILY (*with a cry*) There's Main Street why, that's Mr Morgan's drugstore before he changed it! And there's the livery stable (*She walks toward the back of the stage*)

STAGE MANAGER Yes, it's 1899 This is fourteen years ago

EMILY Oh, that's the town I knew as a little girl And, look, there's the old white fence that used to be around our house Oh, I'd forgotten that! Oh, I love it so! Are they inside?

STAGE MANAGER Yes, your mother'll be coming downstairs in a minute to make breakfast

EMILY (*softly*) Will she?

STAGE MANAGER And you remember your father had been away for several days, he came back on the early morning train

EMILY No >

STAGE MANAGER He'd been back to his college to make a speech—in Western New York, at Clinton

EMILY Look! There's Howie Newsome There's our policeman But he's dead, he died

(*The STAGE MANAGER retires to his corner The voices of HOWIE NEWSOME, CONSTABLE WARREN and JOE CROWELL, JR., are heard at the left of the stage*)

HOWIE NEWSOME Whoa, Bessie! Bessie! Morning, Bill

BILL Morning, Howie

HOWIE NEWSOME You're up early

BILL Been rescuin' a party, darn near froze to death, down by Polish Town thar Got drunk and lay out in the snowdrifts Thought he was in bed when I shook'm

EMILY Why, there's Joe Crowell

JOE CROWELL Good morning, Mr Warren Morning, Howie (*MRS WEBB has appeared in her kitchen, but EMILY does not see her until she calls*)

MRS WEBB Chil-dren! Wally! Emily! Time to get up

EMILY Mama, here I am! Oh! how young Mama looks! I didn't know Mama was ever that young Oh!

MRS WEBB You can come and dress by the kitchen fire, if you like, but hurry (*HOWIE NEWSOME has entered along Main Street and brings the milk to MRS WEBB's door*) Good morning, Mr Newsome Whhhh—it's cold

HOWIE NEWSOME Ten below by my barn, Mrs Webb

MRS WEBB Think of it! Keep yourself wrapped up (*She takes her bottles in, shuddering*)

EMILY (*with an effort*) Mama, I can't find my blue hair ribbon anywhere

MRS WEBB Just open your eyes, dear, that's all I laid it out for you special—on the dresser, there If it were a snake it would bite you

EMILY Yes, yes
(*She puts her hand on her heart MR WEBB comes along Main Street, where he meets* CONSTABLE WARREN)

MR WEBB Good morning, Bill

BILL Good morning, Mr Webb
You're up early

MR WEBB Yes, just been back to my old college in New York State Been any trouble here?

BILL Well, I was called up this mornin' to rescue a Polish fella—damn near froze to death he was

MR WEBB We must get it in the paper

BILL 'Twan't much

EMILY (*whispers*) Papa
(*MR WEBB shakes the snow off his feet and enters his house*)

MR WEBB Good morning, Mother

MRS WEBB How did it go, Charles?

MR WEBB Oh, fine, I guess I told'm a few things

MRS WEBB Did you sit up on the train all night?

MR WEBB Yes Never could sleep on a Pullman anyway

MRS WEBB Charles, seems to me—we're rich enough so that you could sleep in a train once in a while

MR WEBB Everything all right here?

MRS WEBB Yes—can't think of anything that's happened, special Been right cold Howie Newsome says it's ten below over to his barn

MR WEBB Yes, well, it's colder than that at Hamilton College Students' ears are falling off It ain't Christian—Paper have any mistakes in it?

MRS WEBB None that I noticed Coffee's ready when you want it (*He starts upstairs*) Charles! Don't forget, it's Emily's birthday Did you remember to get her something?

MR WEBB (*patting his pocket*) Yes, I've got something here

MRS WEBB Goodness sakes! I hope she likes what I got for her I hunted hard enough for it. Children! Hurry up! Hurry up!

MR WEBB Where's my girl? Where's my birthday girl? (*He goes off left*)

MRS WEBB Don't interrupt her now, Charles You can see her at breakfast She's slow enough as it is Hurry up, children! It's seven o'clock Now, I don't want to call you again

EMILY (*softly, more in wonder than in grief*) I can't bear it They're so young and beautiful Why did they ever have to get old? Mama, I'm here I'm grown up I love you all, every-

thing—I can't look at everything hard enough There's the butternut tree (*She wanders up Main Street*) There's Mr Morgan's drugstore And there's the High School, forever and ever, and ever And there's the Congregational Church where I got married Oh, dear Oh, dear Oh, dear! (*The STAGE MANAGER beckons partially to her He points to the house She says a breathless "yes" and goes to the house*) Good morning, Mama

MRS WEBB (*at the foot of the stairs, kissing her in a matter-of-fact way*) Well, now, dear, a very happy birthday to my girl and many happy returns There are some surprises waiting for you on the kitchen table

EMILY Oh, Mama, you shouldn't have (*She throws an anguished glance at the STAGE MANAGER*) I can't—I can't

MRS WEBB (*facing the audience, over her stove*) But birthday or no birthday, I want you to eat your breakfast good and slow I want you to grow up and be a good strong girl (*She goes to the stairs and calls*) Wally! Wally, wash yourself good Everything's getting cold down here (*She returns to the stove with her back to EMILY EMILY opens her parcels*) That in the blue paper is from your Aunt Carrie and I reckon you can guess who brought the post card album I found it on the doorstep when I brought in the milk—George Gibbs must have come over in the cold pretty early night nice of him

EMILY (*to herself*) Oh, George! I'd forgotten that

MRS WEBB Chew that bacon slow It'll help keep you warm on a cold day

EMILY (*beginning softly but urgently*) Oh, Mama, just look at me one minute as though you really saw me Mama, fourteen years have gone by I'm dead You're a grandmother, Mama I married George Gibbs, Mama Wally's dead, too Mama, his appendix burst on a camping trip to North Conway We felt just terrible about it—don't you remember? But, just for a moment now we're all together Mama, just for a moment we're happy Let's look at one another

MRS WEBB That in the yellow paper is something I found in the attic among your grandmother's things You're old enough to wear it now, and I thought you'd like it

EMILY And this is from you Why, Mama, it's just lovely and it's just what I wanted It's beautiful! (*She flings her arms around her mother's neck Her mother goes on with her cooking, but is pleased*)

MRS WEBB Well, I hoped you'd like it Hunted all over Your Aunt Nora couldn't find one in Concord, so I had to send all the way to Boston (*Laughing*) Wally has something for you, too He made it at Manual Training class and he's very proud of it Be sure you make a big fuss about it—Your father has a surprise for you, too, don't know what it is myself Sh—here he comes

MR WEBB (*off stage*) Where's my girl? Where's my birthday girl?

EMILY (*in a loud voice to the STAGE MANAGER*) I can't I can't go on Oh! Oh It goes so fast We don't have time to look at one another (*She breaks down sobbing At a gesture from the STAGE MANAGER, MRS WEBB disappears*) I didn't realize. So

all that was going on and we never noticed Take me back—up the hill—to my grave But first Wait! One more look Good-by, good-by, world Good-by, Grover's Corners Mama and Papa Good-by to clocks ticking and Mama's sunflowers And food and coffee And new-ironed dresses and hot baths and sleeping and waking up Oh, earth, you're too wonderful for anybody to realize you (*She looks toward the STAGE MANAGER and asks abruptly, through her tears*) Do any human beings ever realize life while they live it?—every, every minute?

STAGE MANAGER No (*Pause*) The saints and poets, maybe—they do some

EMILY I'm ready to go back (*She returns to her chair beside MRS GIBBS*) Mother Gibbs, I should have listened to you Now I want to be quiet for a while—Oh, Mother Gibbs, I saw it all I saw your garden

MRS GIBBS Did you, dear?

EMILY That's all human beings are!—Just blind people

MRS GIBBS Look, it's cleaning up The stars are coming out

EMILY Oh, Mr Stimson, I should have listened to them

SIMON STIMSON (*with mounting violence, biting*) Yes, now you know Now you know! That's what it was to be alive To move about in a cloud of ignorance, to go up and down trampling on the feelings of those of those about you To spend and waste time as though you had a million years To be always at the mercy of one self-centered passion,

or another Now you know—that's the happy existence you wanted to go back and see Did you shout to 'em? Did you call to 'em?

EMILY Yes, I did

SIMON STIMSON Now you know them as they are in ignorance and blindness

MRS GIBBS (*spiritedly*) Simon Stimson, that ain't the whole truth and you know it (*The dead have begun to stir*)

THE DEAD Lemuel, wind's coming up, seems like—Oh, dear,—I keep remembering things tonight—It's right cold for June, ain't it?

MRS GIBBS Look what you've done, you and your rebellious spirit stirring us up here—Emily, look at that star I forget its name

THE DEAD I'm getting to know them all, but I don't know their names—My boy Joel was a sailor,—knew 'em all He'd set on the porch evenings and tell 'em all by name Yes, sir, it was wonderful—A star's mighty good company—Yes, yes—Yes, 'tis

SIMON STIMSON Here's one of *them* coming

THE DEAD That's funny 'Tain't no time for one of them to be here—Goodness sakes

EMILY Mother Gibbs, it's George

MRS GIBBS Sh, dear You just rest yourself

EMILY It's George (*GEORGE enters from the left, and slowly comes toward them*)

A MAN FROM AMONG THE DEAD And my boy, Joel, who knew the stars—

he used to say it took millions of years for that speck o' light to git to the earth Don't seem like a body could believe it, but that's what he used to say—millions of years

ANOTHER That's what they say
(GEORGE flings himself on EMILY's grave)

THE DEAD Goodness! That ain't no way to behave!—He ought to be home

EMILY Mother Gibbs?

MRS GIBBS Yes, Emily?

EMILY They don't understand much, do they?

MRS GIBBS No, dear, not very much
(The STAGE MANAGER appears at the right, one hand on a dark curtain which he slowly draws across the

scene In the distance a clock is heard striking the hour very faintly)

STAGE MANAGER Most everybody's asleep in Grover's Corners There are a few lights on Shorty Hawkins, down at the depot, has just watched the Albany train go by And at the livery stable somebody's setting up late and talking—Yes, it's clearing up There are the stars—doing their old, old criss-cross journeys in the sky Scholars haven't settled the matter yet, but they seem to think there are no living beings up there They're just chalk or fire Only this one is straining away, straining away all the time to make something of itself The strain's so bad that every sixteen hours everybody lies down and gets a rest (He winds his watch) Hm Eleven o'clock in Grover's Corners—You get a good rest, too Good-night

The Little Foxes

BY LILLIAN HELLMAN

*"Take us the foxes, the little foxes,
that spoil the vines, for our vines
have tender grapes"*

FOR ARTHUR KOBER AND LOUIS KRONENBERGER
WHO HAVE BEEN MY GOOD FRIENDS

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The Little Foxes was first produced at the National Theatre, New York City, by Herman Shumlin, on February 15, 1939, and closed on January 20 1940. Following is the original cast

| | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| ADDIE | Abbie Mitchell |
| CAL | John Marriott |
| BIRDIE HUBBARD | Patricia Collinge |
| OSCAR HUBBARD | Carl Benton Reid |
| LEO HUBBARD | Dan Duryea |
| REGINA GIDDENS | Tallulah Bankhead |
| WILLIAM MARSHALL | Lee Baker |
| BENJAMIN HUBBARD | Charles Dingle |
| ALEXANDRA GIDDENS | Florence Williams |
| HORACE GIDDENS | Frank Conroy |

Produced and staged by Herman Shumlin

Settings designed by Howard Bay

Costumes designed by Aline Bernstein

SCENES

The scene of the play is the living room of the Gaddens house, in a small town in the South

ACT ONE

The spring of 1900, evening

ACT TWO

A week later, early morning

ACT THREE

Two weeks later, late afternoon

There has been no attempt to write Southern dialect. It is to be understood that the accents are Southern.

THE LITTLE FOXES

ACT ONE

SCENE—The living room of the Giddens house, in a small town in the deep South, the spring of 1900. Upstage is a staircase leading to the second story. Upstage, right, are double doors to the dining room. When these doors are open we see a section of the dining room and the furniture. Upstage, left, is an entrance hall with a coat rack and umbrella stand. There are large lace curtained windows on the left wall. The room is lit by a center gas chandelier and painted china oil lamps on the tables. Against the wall is a large piano. Downstage, right, are a high couch, a large table, several chairs. Against the left back wall are a table and several chairs. Near the window there are a smaller couch and tables. The room is good-looking, the furniture expensive, but it reflects no particular taste. Everything is of the best and that is all.

AT RISE—ADDIE, a tall, nice-looking Negro woman of about fifty-five, is closing the windows. From behind the closed dining-room doors there is the sound of voices. After a second, CAL, a middle-aged Negro, comes in from the entrance hall carrying a tray with glasses and a bottle of port. ADDIE crosses, takes the tray from him, puts it on table, begins to arrange it.

ADDIE (pointing to the bottle) You gone stark out of your head?

CAL No, smart lady, I ain't. Miss Regina told me to get out that bottle. (Points to bottle) That very bottle for the mighty honored guest. When Miss Regina changes orders like that you can bet your dime she got her reason.

ADDIE (points to dining room) Go on. You'll be needed.

CAL Miss Zan she had two helpings frozen fruit cream and she tell that honored guest, she tell him that you make the best frozen fruit cream in all the South.

ADDIE (smiles, pleased) Did she? Well, see that Belle saves a little for her. She like it right before she go to

bed. Save a few little cakes, too, she like—

(The dining-room doors are opened and quickly closed again by BIRDIE HUBBARD. BIRDIE is a woman of about forty, with a pretty, well-bred, faded face. Her movements are usually nervous and timid, but now, as she comes running into the room, she is gay and excited. CAL turns to BIRDIE.)

BIRDIE Oh, Cal. (Closes door) I want you to get one of the kitchen boys to run home for me. He's to look in my desk drawer and— (To ADDIE) My, Addie. What a good supper! Just as good as good can be.

ADDIE You look pretty this evening, Miss Birdie, and young.

BIRDIE (laughing) Me, young? (Turns back to CAL) Maybe you bet-

ter find Simon and tell him to do it himself He's to look in my desk, the left drawer, and bring my music album right away Mr Marshall is very anxious to see it because of his father and the opera in Chicago (To ADDIE) Mr Marshall is such a polite man with his manners and very educated and cultured and I've told him all about how my mamma and papa used to go to Europe for the music— (Laughs To ADDIE) Imagine going all the way to Europe just to listen to music Wouldn't that be nice, Addie? Just to sit there and listen and— (Turns and steps to CAL) Left drawer, Cal Tell him that twice because he forgets And tell him not to let any of the things drop out of the album and to bring it right in here when he comes back

(The dining-room doors are opened and quickly closed by OSCAR HUBBARD He is a man in his late forties)

CAL Yes'm But Simon he won't get it right But I'll tell him

BIRDIE Left drawer, Cal, and tell him to bring the blue book and—

OSCAR (sharply) Birdie

BIRDIE (turning nervously) Oh, Oscar I was just sending Simon for my music album

OSCAR (to CAL) Never mind about the album Miss Birdie has changed her mind

BIRDIE But, really, Oscar Really I promised Mr Marshall I— (CAL looks at them, exits)

OSCAR Why do you leave the dinner table and go running about like a child?

BIRDIE (trying to be gay) But, Oscar, Mr Marshall said most specially he wanted to see my album I told him about the time Mama met Wagner, and Mrs Wagner gave her the signed program and the big picture Mr Marshall wants to see that Very, very much We had such a nice talk and—

OSCAR (taking a step to her) You have been chattering to him like a magpie You haven't let him be for a second I can't think he came South to be bored with you

BIRDIE (quickly, hurt) He wasn't bored I don't believe he was bored He's a very educated, cultured gentleman (Her voice rises) I just don't believe it You always talk like that when I'm having a nice time

OSCAR (turning to her, sharply) You have had too much wine Get yourself in hand now

BIRDIE (drawing back, about to cry, shrilly) What am I doing? I am not doing anything What am I doing?

OSCAR (taking a step to her, tensely) I said get yourself in hand Stop acting like a fool

BIRDIE (turns to him, quietly) I don't believe he was bored I just don't believe it Some people like music and like to talk about it That's all I was doing

(LEO HUBBARD comes hurrying through the dining-room door He is a young man of twenty, with a weak kind of good looks)

LEO Mama! Papa! They are coming in now

OSCAR (softly) Sit down, Birdie Sit down now (BIRDIE sits down, bows

her head as if to hide her face)
(The dining-room doors are opened by CAL. We see people beginning to rise from the table. REGINA GIDDENS comes in with WILLIAM MARSHALL. REGINA is a handsome woman of forty. MARSHALL is forty-five, pleasant-looking, self-possessed. Behind them comes ALEXANDRA GIDDENS, a very pretty, rather delicate-looking girl of seventeen. She is followed by BENJAMIN HUBBARD, fifty-five, with a large jovial face and the light graceful movements that one often finds in large men.)

REGINA Mr Marshall, I think you're trying to console me. Chicago may be the noisiest, dirtiest city in the world but I should still prefer it to the sound of our horses and the smell of our azaleas. I should like crowds of people, and theatres, and lovely women—Very lovely women, Mr Marshall?

MARSHALL *(crossing to sofa)* In Chicago? Oh, I suppose so. But I can tell you this. I've never dined there with three such lovely ladies.
(ADDIE begins to pass the port.)

BEN Our Southern women are well favored.

LEO *(laughs)* But one must go to Mobile for the ladies, sir. Very elegant worldly ladies, too.

BEN *(looks at him very deliberately)* Worldly, eh? Worldly, did you say?

OSCAR *(hastily, to LEO)* Your uncle Ben means that worldliness is not a mark of beauty in any woman.

LEO *(quickly)* Of course, Uncle Ben. I didn't mean—

MARSHALL Your port is excellent.
 Mrs Giddens.

REGINA Thank you, Mr Marshall. We had been saving that bottle, hoping we could open it just for you.

ALEXANDRA *(as ADDIE comes to her with the tray)*. Oh. May I really, Addie?

ADDIE Better ask Mama.

ALEXANDRA May I, Mama?

REGINA *(nods, smiles)* In Mr Marshall's honor.

ALEXANDRA *(smiles)* Mr Marshall, this will be the first taste of port I've ever had.
(ADDIE serves LEO.)

MARSHALL No one ever had their first taste of a better port. *(He lifts his glass in a toast, she lifts hers, they both drink.)* Well, I suppose it is all true, Mrs Giddens.

REGINA What is true?

MARSHALL That you Southerners occupy a unique position in America. You live better than the rest of us, you eat better, you drink better. I wonder you find time, or want to find time, to do business.

BEN A great many Southerners don't.

MARSHALL Do all of you live here together?

REGINA Here with me? *(Laughs)* Oh, no. My brother Ben lives next door. My brother Oscar and his family live in the next square.

BEN But we are a very close family. We've always *wanted* it that way.

MARSHALL That is very pleasant Keeping your family together to share each other's lives My family moves around too much My children seem never to come home Away at school in the winter, in the summer, Europe with their mother—

REGINA (*eagerly*) Oh, yes Even down here we read about Mrs Marshall in the society pages

MARSHALL I dare say She moves about a great deal And all of you are part of the same business? Hubbard Sons?

BEN (*motions to OSCAR*) Oscar and me (*Motions to REGINA*) My sister's good husband is a banker

MARSHALL (*looks at REGINA, surprised*) Oh

REGINA I am so sorry that my husband isn't here to meet you He's been very ill He is at Johns Hopkins But he will be home soon We think he is getting better now

LEO I work for Uncle Horace (*REGINA looks at him*) I mean I work for Uncle Horace at his bank I keep an eye on things while he's away

REGINA (*smiles*) Really, Leo?

BEN (*looks at LEO, then to MARSHALL*) Modesty in the young is as excellent as it is rare (*Looks at LEO again*)

OSCAR (*to LEO*) Your uncle means that a young man should speak more modestly

LEO (*hastily, taking a step to BEN*) Oh, I didn't mean, sir—

MARSHALL Oh, Mrs Hubbard. Where's that Wagner autograph you promised to let me see? My train will be leaving soon and—

BIRDIE The autograph? Oh Well Really, Mr Marshall, I didn't mean to chatter so about it Really I— (*Nervously, looking at OSCAR*) You must excuse me I didn't get it because, well, because I had—I—I had a little headache and—

OSCAR My wife is a miserable victim of headaches

REGINA (*quickly*) Mr Marshall said at supper that he would like you to play for him, Alexandra

ALEXANDRA (*who has been looking at BIRDIE*) It's not I who play well, sir It's my aunt She plays just wonderfully She's my teacher (*Rises Eagerly*) May we play a duet? May we, Mama?

BIRDIE (*taking ALEXANDRA's hand*) Thank you, dear But I have my headache now I—

OSCAR (*sharply*) Don't be stubborn, Birdie Mr Marshall wants you to play

MARSHALL Indeed I do If your headache isn't—

BIRDIE (*hesitates, then gets up, pleased*) But I'd like to, sir Very much (*She and ALEXANDRA go to the piano*)

MARSHALL It's very remarkable how you Southern aristocrats have kept together Kept together and kept what belonged to you

BEN You misunderstand, sir Southern aristocrats have *not* kept together

and have not kept what belonged to them

MARSHALL (*laughs, indicates room*) You don't call this keeping what belongs to you?

BEN But we are not aristocrats (*Points to BIRDIE at the piano*) Our brother's wife is the only one of us who belongs to the Southern aristocracy (*BIRDIE looks towards BEN*)

MARSHALL (*smiles*) My information is that you people have been here, and solidly here, for a long time

OSCAR And so we have Since our great-grandfather

BEN (*smiles*) Who was not an aristocrat, like Birdie's

MARSHALL (*a little sharply*) You make great distinctions

BEN Oh, they have been made for us And maybe they are important distinctions (*Leans forward, intimately*) Now you take Birdie's family When my great-grandfather came here they were the highest-tone plantation owners in this state

LEO (*steps to MARSHALL Proudly*) My mother's grandfather was governor of the state before the war

OSCAR They owned the plantation, Lionnet You may have heard of it, sir?

MARSHALL (*laughs*) No, I've never heard of anything but brick houses on a lake, and cotton mills

BEN Lionnet in its day was the best cotton land in the South It still

brings us in a fair crop (*Sits back*) Ah, they were great days for those people—even when I can remember. They had the best of everything. (*BIRDIE turns to them*) Cloth from Paris, trips to Europe, horses you can't raise any more, niggers to lift their fingers—

BIRDIE (*suddenly*) We were good to our people Everybody knew that. We were better to them than— (*MARSHALL looks up at BIRDIE*)

REGINA Why, Birdie You aren't playing

BEN But when the war comes these fine gentlemen ride off and leave the cotton, and the women, to rot

BIRDIE My father was killed in the war He was a fine soldier, Mr Marshall A fine man

REGINA Oh, certainly, Birdie A famous soldier

BEN (*to BIRDIE*) But that isn't the tale I am telling Mr Marshall (*To MARSHALL*) Well, sir, the war ends (*BIRDIE goes back to piano*) Lionnet is almost ruined, and the sons finish ruining it And there were thousands like them Why? (*Leans forward*) Because the Southern aristocrat can adapt himself to nothing Too high-tone to try

MARSHALL Sometimes it is difficult to learn new ways (*BIRDIE and ALEXANDRA begin to play MARSHALL leans forward, listening*)

BEN Perhaps, perhaps. (*He sees that MARSHALL is listening to the music. Irritated, he turns to BIRDIE and ALEXANDRA at the piano, then back to MARSHALL*) You're right, Mr.

Marshall It is difficult to learn new ways But maybe that's why it's profitable Our grandfather and our father learned the new ways and learned how to make them pay They work (*Smiles nastily*) They are in trade Hubbard Sons, Merchandise Others, Birdie's family, for example, look down on them (*Settles back in chair*) To make a long story short, Lionnet now belongs to us (*BIRDIE stops playing*) Twenty years ago we took over their land, their cotton, and their daughter (*BIRDIE rises and stands stiffly by the piano* **MARSHALL, who has been watching her, rises)**

MARSHALL May I bring you a glass of port, Mrs Hubbard?

BIRDIE (*softly*) No, thank you, sir You are most polite

REGINA (*sharply, to BEN*) You are boring Mr Marshall with these ancient family tales

BEN I hope not I hope not I am trying to make an important point— (*Bows to MARSHALL*) for our future business partner

OSCAR (*to MARSHALL*) My brother always says that it's folks like us who have struggled and fought to bring to our land some of the prosperity of your land

BEN Some people call that patriotism

REGINA (*laughs gaily*) I hope you don't find my brothers too obvious, Mr Marshall I'm afraid they mean that this is the time for the ladies to leave the gentlemen to talk business

MARSHALL (*hastily*) Not at all We settled everything this afternoon (*MARSHALL looks at his watch*) I have only a few minutes before I must leave for the train (*Smiles at her*) And I insist they be spent with you

REGINA And with another glass of port

MARSHALL Thank you

BEN (*to REGINA*) My sister is right (*To MARSHALL*) I am a plain man and I am trying to say a plain thing A man ain't only in business for what he can get out of it It's got to give him something here (*Puts hand to his breast*) That's every bit as true for the nigger picking cotton for a silver quarter, as it is for you and me (*REGINA gives MARSHALL a glass of port*) If it don't give him something here, then he don't pick the cotton right Money isn't all Not by three shots

MARSHALL Really? Well, I always thought it was a great deal

REGINA And so did I, Mr Marshall

MARSHALL (*leans forward Pleasantly, but with meaning*) Now you don't have to convince me that you are the right people for the deal I wouldn't be here if you hadn't convinced me six months ago You want the mill here, and I want it here It isn't my business to find out why you want it

BEN To bring the machine to the cotton, and not the cotton to the machine

MARSHALL (*amused*) You have a turn for neat phrases, Hubbard.

Well, however grand your reasons are, mine are simple. I want to make money and I believe I'll make it on you. (*As BEN starts to speak, he smiles*) Mind you, I have no objections to more high-minded reasons. They are mighty valuable in business. It's fine to have partners who so closely follow the teachings of Christ (*Gets up*) And now I must leave for my train.

REGINA I'm sorry you won't stay over with us, Mr. Marshall, but you'll come again. Any time you like.

BEN (*motions to LEO, indicating the bottle*) Fill them up, boy, fill them up. (*LEO moves around filling the glasses as BEN speaks*) Down here, sir, we have a strange custom. We drink the last drink for a toast. That's to prove that the Southerner is always still on his feet for the last drink. (*Picks up his glass*) It was Henry Frick, your Mr. Henry Frick, who said, "Railroads are the Rembrandts of investments." Well, I say, "Southern cotton mills will be the Rembrandts of investment." So I give you the firm of Hubbard Sons and Marshall, Cotton Mills, and to it a long and prosperous life. (*They all pick up their glasses. MARSHALL looks at them, amused. Then he, too, lifts his glass, smiles.*)

OSCAR The children will drive you to the depot. Leo! Alexandra! You will drive Mr. Marshall down.

LEO (*eagerly, looks at BEN who nods*) Yes, sir. (*To MARSHALL*) Not often Uncle Ben lets me drive the horses. And a beautiful pair they are. (*Starts for hall*) Come on, Zan.

ALEXANDRA May I drive tonight, Uncle Ben, please? I'd like to and—

BEN (*shakes his head, laughs*) In your evening clothes? Oh, no, my dear.

ALEXANDRA But Leo always—(*Stops, exits quickly*)

REGINA I don't like to say good-bye to you, Mr. Marshall.

MARSHALL Then we won't say good-bye. You have promised that you would come and let me show you Chicago. Do I have to make you promise again?

REGINA (*looks at him as he presses her hand*) I promise again.

MARSHALL (*touches her hand again, then moves to BIRDIE*) Good-bye, Mrs. Hubbard.

BIRDIE (*shyly, with sweetness and dignity*) Good-bye, sir.

MARSHALL (*as he passes REGINA*). Remember.

REGINA I will.

OSCAR We'll see you to the carriage. (*MARSHALL exits, followed by BEN and OSCAR. For a second REGINA and BIRDIE stand looking after them. Then REGINA throws up her arms, laughs happily.*)

REGINA And there, Birdie, goes the man who has opened the door to our future.

BIRDIE (*surprised at the unaccustomed friendliness*) What?

REGINA (*turning to her*) Our future. Yours and mine, Ben's and Oscar's, the children—(*Looks at BIRDIE's puzzled face, laughs*) Our

future! (*Gaily*) You were charming at supper, Birdie Mr Marshall certainly thought so

BIRDIE (*pleased*) Why, Reginal Do you think he did?

REGINA Can't you tell when you're being admired?

BIRDIE Oscar said I bored Mr Marshall (*Then quietly*) But he admired you He told me so

REGINA What did he say?

BIRDIE He said to me, "I hope your sister-in-law will come to Chicago Chicago will be at her feet" He said the ladies would bow to your manners and the gentlemen to your looks

REGINA Did he? He seems a lonely man Imagine being lonely with all that money I don't think he likes his wife

BIRDIE Not like his wife? What a thing to say

REGINA She's away a great deal He said that several times And once he made fun of her being so social and high-tone But that fits in all right (*Sits back, arms on back of sofa, stretches*) Her being social, I mean She can introduce me It won't take long with an introduction from her

BIRDIE (*bewildered*) Introduce you? In Chicago? You mean you really might go? Oh, Regina, you can't leave here What about Horace?

REGINA Don't look so scared about everything, Birdie I'm going to live in Chicago. I've always wanted to And now there'll be plenty of money to go with.

BIRDIE But Horace won't be able to move around You know what the doctor wrote

REGINA. There'll be millions, Birdie, millions You know what I've always said when people told me we were rich? I said I think you should either be a nigger or a millionaire In between, like us, what for? (*Laughs Looks at BIRDIE*) But I'm not going away tomorrow, Birdie There's plenty of time to worry about Horace when he comes home If he ever decides to come home

BIRDIE Will we be going to Chicago? I mean, Oscar and Leo and me?

REGINA You? I shouldn't think so (*Laughs*) Well, we must remember tonight It's a very important night and we mustn't forget it We shall plan all the things we'd like to have and then we'll really have them Make a wish, Birdie, any wish It's bound to come true now (*BEN and OSCAR enter*)

BIRDIE (*laughs*) Well Well, I don't know Maybe (*REGINA turns to look at BEN*) Well, I guess I'd know right off what I wanted (*OSCAR stands by the upper window, waves to the departing carriage*)

REGINA (*looks up at BEN, smiles He smiles back at her*) Well, you did it

BEN Looks like it might be we did

REGINA (*springs up, laughs*) Looks like it! Don't pretend You're like a cat who's been licking the cream (*Crosses to wine bottle*) Now we must all have a drink to celebrate

OSCAR The children, Alexandra and Leo, make a very handsome couple.

REGINA. Marshall remarked himself what fine young folks they were How well they looked together!

REGINA (*sharply*) Yes You said that before, Oscar

BEN Yes, sir. It's beginning to look as if the deal's all set I may not be a subtle man—but— (*Turns to them After a second*) Now somebody ask me how I know the deal is set

OSCAR What do you mean, Ben?

BEN You remember I told him that down here we drink the *last* drink for a toast?

OSCAR (*thoughtfully*) Yes I never heard that before

BEN Nobody's ever heard it before God forgives those who invent what they need I already had his signature But we've all done business with men whose word over a glass is better than a bond Anyway it don't hurt to have both

OSCAR (*turns to REGINA*) You understand what Ben means?

REGINA (*smiles*) Yes, Oscar I understand I understood immediately

BEN (*looks at her admiringly*) Did you, Regina? Well, when he lifted his glass to drink, I closed my eyes and saw the bricks going into place.

REGINA And I saw a lot more than that

BEN Slowly, slowly As yet we have only our hopes

REGINA Birdie and I have just been planning what we want I know

what I want. What will you want, Ben?

BEN Caution Don't count the chickens (*Leans back, laughs*) Well, God would allow us a little daydreaming. Good for the soul when you've worked hard enough to deserve it (*Pauses*) I think I'll have a stable For a long time I've had my good eye on Carter's in Savannah A rich man's pleasure, the sport of kings, why not the sport of Hubbards? Why not?

REGINA (*smiles*) Why not? What will you have, Oscar?

OSCAR I don't know (*Thoughtfully*) The pleasure of seeing the bricks grow will be enough for me

BEN Oh, of course Our *greatest* pleasure will be to see the bricks grow But we are all entitled to a little side indulgence

OSCAR Yes, I suppose so Well, then, I think we might take a few trips here and there, eh, Birdie?

BIRDIE (*surprised at being consulted*) Yes, Oscar I'd like that

OSCAR We might even make a regular trip to Jekyll Island I've heard the Cornelly place is for sale We might think about buying it Make a nice change Do you good, Birdie, a change of climate Fine shooting on Jekyll, the best

BIRDIE I'd like—

OSCAR (*indulgently*) What would you like?

BIRDIE Two things Two things I'd like most

REGINA Two! I should like a thousand You are modest, Birdie

BIRDIE (*warmly, delighted with the unexpected interest*) I should like to have Lionnet back I know you own it now, but I'd like to see it fixed up again, the way Mama and Papa had it Every year it used to get a nice coat of paint—Papa was very particular about the paint—and the lawn was so smooth all the way down to the river, with the trims of zinnias and red-feather plush And the figs and blue little plums and the scuppernongs— (*Smiles Turns to REGINA*) The organ is still there and it wouldn't cost much to fix We could have parties for Zan, the way Mama used to have for me

BEN That's a pretty picture, Birdie Might be a most pleasant way to live (*Dismissing BIRDIE*) What do you want, Regina?

BIRDIE (*very happily, not noticing that they are no longer listening to her*) I could have a cutting garden Just where Mama's used to be Oh, I do think we could be happier there Papa used to say that *nobody* had ever lost their temper at Lionnet, and *nobody* ever would Papa would never let anybody be nasty-spoken or mean No, sir He just didn't like it

BEN What do you want, Regina?

REGINA I'm going to Chicago And when I'm settled there and know the right people and the right things to buy—because I certainly don't now—I shall go to Paris and buy them (*Laughs*) I'm going to leave you and Oscar to count the bricks

BIRDIE Oscar Please let me have Lionnet back

OSCAR (*to REGINA*). You are serious about moving to Chicago?

BEN She is going to see the great world and leave us in the little one Well, we'll come and visit you and meet all the great and be proud to think you are our sister

REGINA (*gaily*) Certainly And you won't even have to learn to be subtle, Ben Stay as you are You will be rich and the rich don't have to be subtle

OSCAR But what about Alexandra? She's seventeen Old enough to be thinking about marrying

BIRDIE And, Oscar, I have one more wish Just one more wish

OSCAR (*turns*) What is it, Birdie? What are you saying?

BIRDIE I want you to stop shooting I mean, so much I don't like to see animals and birds killed just for the killing You only throw them away—

BEN (*to REGINA*) It'll take a great deal of money to live as you're planning, Regina

REGINA Certainly But there'll be plenty of money You have estimated the profits very high

BEN I have—

BIRDIE (*OSCAR is looking at her furiously*) And you never let anybody else shoot, and the niggers need it so much to keep from starving It's wicked to shoot food just because you like to shoot, when poor people need it so—

BEN (*laughs*) I have estimated the profits very high—for myself

REGINA What did you say?

BIRDIE I've always wanted to speak about it, Oscar

OSCAR (*slowly, carefully*) What are you chattering about?

BIRDIE (*nervously*) I was talking about Lionnet and—and about your shooting—

OSCAR You are exciting yourself

REGINA (*to BEN*) I didn't hear you There was so much talking

OSCAR (*to BIRDIE*) You have been acting very childish, very excited, all evening

BIRDIE Regina asked me what I'd like

REGINA What did you say, Ben?

BIRDIE Now that we'll be so rich everybody was saying what they would like, so I said what I would like, too

BEN I said— (*He is interrupted by OSCAR*)

OSCAR (*to BIRDIE*) Very well We've all heard you That's enough now

BEN I am waiting (*They stop*) I am waiting for you to finish You and Birdie Four conversations are three too many (*BIRDIE slowly sits down BEN smiles, to REGINA*) I said that I had, and I do, estimate the profits very high—for myself, and Oscar, of course

REGINA (*slowly*) And what does that mean?

(*BEN shrugs, looks towards OSCAR*)

OSCAR (*looks at BEN, clears throat*). Well, Regina, it's like this For forty-nine per cent Marshall will put up four hundred thousand dollars For fifty-one per cent— (*Smiles archly*) a controlling interest, mind you, we will put up two hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars besides offering him certain benefits that our (*Looks at BEN*) local position allows us to manage Ben means that two hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars is a lot of money

REGINA I know the terms and I know it's a lot of money

BEN (*nodding*) It is

OSCAR Ben means that we are ready with our two-thirds of the money Your third, Horace's I mean, doesn't seem to be ready (*Raises his hand as REGINA starts to speak*) Ben has written to Horace, I have written, and you have written He answers But he never mentions this business Yet we have explained it to him in great detail, and told him the urgency Still he never mentions it Ben has been very patient, Regina Naturally, you are our sister and we want you to benefit from anything we do

REGINA And in addition to your concern for me, you do not want control to go out of the family (*To BEN*) That right, Ben?

BEN That's cynical (*Smiles*) Cynicism is an unpleasant way of saying the truth

OSCAR No need to be cynical We'd have no trouble raising the third share, the share that you want to take

REGINA I am sure you could get the third share, the share you were saw

ing for me But that would give you a strange partner And strange partners sometimes want a great deal (*Smiles unpleasantly*) But perhaps it would be wise for you to find him

OSCAR Now, now Nobody says we want to do that We would like to have you in and you would like to come in

REGINA Yes I certainly would

BEN (*laughs, puts up his hand*) But we haven't heard from Horace

REGINA I've given my word that Horace will put up the money That should be enough

BEN Oh, it was enough I took your word But I've got to have more than your word now The contracts will be signed this week, and Marshall will want to see our money soon after Regina, Horace has been in Baltimore for five months I know that you've written him to come home, and that he hasn't come

OSCAR It's beginning to look as if he doesn't want to come home

REGINA Of course he wants to come home You can't move around with heart trouble at any moment you choose You know what doctors are like once they get their hands on a case like this—

OSCAR They can't very well keep him from answering letters, can they? (*REGINA turns to BEN*) They couldn't keep him from arranging for the money if he wanted to—

REGINA Has it occurred to you that Horace is also a good business man?

BEN Certainly He is a shrewd trader Always has been The bank is proof of that

REGINA Then, possibly, he may be keeping silent because he doesn't think he is getting enough for his money (*Looks at OSCAR*) Seventy-five thousand he has to put up That's a lot of money, too

OSCAR Nonsense He knows a good thing when he hears it He knows that we can make *twice* the profit on cotton goods manufactured *here* than can be made in the North

BEN That isn't what Regina means (*Smiles*) May I interpret you, Regina? (*To OSCAR*) Regina is saying that Horace wants *more* than a third of our share

OSCAR But he's only putting up a third of the money You put up a third and you get a third What else *could* he expect?

REGINA Well, I don't know I don't know about these things It would seem that if you put up a third you should only get a third But then again, there's no law about it, is there? I should think that if you knew your money was very badly needed, well, you just might say, I want more, I want a bigger share You boys have done that I've heard you say so

BEN (*after a pause, laughs*) So you believe he has deliberately held out? For a larger share? (*Leaning forward*) Well, I *don't* believe it But I *do* believe that's what you want Am I right, Regina?

REGINA Oh, I shouldn't like to be too definite But I *could* say that I

wouldn't like to persuade Horace unless he did get a larger share I must look after his interests It seems only natural—

OSCAR And where would the larger share come from?

REGINA I don't know That's not my business (*Giggles*) But perhaps it could come off your share, Oscar (*REGINA and BEN laugh*)

OSCAR (*rises and wheels furiously on both of them as they laugh*) What kind of talk is this?

BEN I haven't said a thing

OSCAR (*to REGINA*) You are talking very big tonight

REGINA (*stops laughing*) Am I? Well, you should know me well enough to know that I wouldn't be asking for things I didn't think I could get

OSCAR Listen I don't believe you can even get Horace to come home, much less get money from him or talk quite so big about what you want

REGINA Oh, I can get him home

OSCAR Then why haven't you?

REGINA I thought I should fight his battles for him, before he came home Horace is a very sick man And even if you don't care how sick he is, I do

BEN Stop this foolish squabbling How can you get him home?

REGINA I will send Alexandra to Baltimore She will ask him to come home She will say that she *wants*

him to come home, and that I want him to come home

BIRDIE (*suddenly*) Well, of course she wants him here, but he's sick and maybe he's happy where he is

REGINA (*ignores BIRDIE, to BEN*) You agree that he will come home if she asks him to, if she says that I miss him and want him—

BEN (*looks at her, smiles*) I admire you, Regina And I agree That's settled now and— (*Starts to rise*)

REGINA (*quickly*) But before she brings him home, I want to know what he's going to get

BEN What do you want?

REGINA Twice what you offered

BEN Well, you won't get it

OSCAR (*to REGINA*) I think you've gone crazy

REGINA I don't want to fight, Ben—

BEN I don't either You won't get it There isn't any chance of that (*Reluctantly*) You're holding us up, and that's not pretty, Regina, not pretty (*Holds up his hand as he sees she is about to speak*) But we need you, and I don't want to fight Here's what I'll do I'll give Horace forty per cent, instead of the thirty-three and a third he really should get I'll do that, provided he is home and his money is up within two weeks How's that?

REGINA All right

OSCAR I've asked before where is this extra share coming from?

BEN (*pleasantly*). From you From your share

OSCAR (*furiously*) From me, is it? That's just fine and dandy That's my reward For thirty-five years I've worked my hands to the bone for you For thirty-five years I've done all the things you didn't want to do And this is what I—

BEN (*turns slowly to look at OSCAR OSCAR breaks off*) My, my I am being attacked tonight on all sides First by my sister, then by my brother And I ain't a man who likes being attacked I can't believe that God wants the strong to parade their strength, but I don't mind doing it if it's got to be done (*Leans back in his chair*) You ought to take these things better, Oscar I've made you money in the past I'm going to make you more money now You'll be a very rich man What's the difference to any of us if a little more goes here, a little less goes there—it's all in the family And it will stay in the family I'll never marry (*ADDIE enters, begins to gather the glasses from the table OSCAR turns to BEN*) So my money will go to Alexandra and Leo They may even marry some day and— (*ADDIE looks at BEN*)

BIRDIE (*rising*) Marry—Zan and Leo—

OSCAR (*carefully*) That would make a great difference in my feelings If they married

BEN Yes, that's what I mean Of course it would make a difference

OSCAR (*carefully*) Is that what you mean, Regina?

REGINA Oh, it's too far away We'll talk about it in a few years

OSCAR I want to talk about it now.

BEN (*nods*) Naturally

REGINA There's a lot of things to consider They are first cousins, and—

OSCAR That isn't unusual Our grandmother and grandfather were first cousins

REGINA (*giggles*) And look at us (*BEN giggles*)

OSCAR (*angrily*) You're both being very gay with my money

BEN (*sighs*) These quarrels I dislike them so (*Leans forward to REGINA*) A marriage might be a very wise arrangement, for several reasons And then, Oscar has given up something for you You should try to manage something for him

REGINA I haven't said I was opposed to it But Leo is a wild boy There were those times when he took a little money from the bank and—

OSCAR That's all past history—

REGINA Oh, I know And I know all young men are wild I'm only mentioning it to show you that there are considerations—

BEN (*irritated because she does not understand that he is trying to keep OSCAR quiet*) All right, so there are But please assure Oscar that you will think about it very seriously

REGINA (*smiles, nods*) Very well I assure Oscar that I will think about it seriously

OSCAR (*sharply*) That is not an answer

REGINA (*rises*) My, you're in a bad humor and you shall put me in one I have said all that I am willing to say now After all, Horace has to give his consent, too

OSCAR Horace will do what you tell him to

REGINA Yes, I think he will

OSCAR And I have your word that you will try to—

REGINA (*patiently*) Yes, Oscar You have my word that I will think about it Now do leave me alone (*There is the sound of the front door being closed*)

BIRDIE I—Alexandra is only seventeen She—

REGINA (*calling*) Alexandra? Are you back?

ALEXANDRA Yes, Mama

LEO (*comes into the room*) Mr Marshall got off safe and sound Weren't those fine clothes he had? You can always spot clothes made in a good place Looks like maybe they were done in England Lots of men in the North send all the way to England for their stuff

BEN (*to LEO*) Were you careful driving the horses?

LEO Oh, yes, sir I was (*ALEXANDRA has come in on BEN's question, hears the answer, looks angrily at LEO*)

ALEXANDRA It's a lovely night You should have come, Aunt Birdie

REGINA Were you gracious to Mr Marshall?

ALEXANDRA I think so, Mama I liked him

REGINA Good And now I have great news for you You are going to Baltimore in the morning to bring your father home

ALEXANDRA (*gasps, then delighted*) Me? Papa said I should come? That must mean— (*Turns to ADDIE*) Addie, he must be well Think of it, he'll be back home again We'll bring him home

REGINA You are going alone, Alexandra

ADDIE (*ALEXANDRA has turned in surprise*) Going alone? Going by herself? A child that age! Mr Horace ain't going to like Zan traipsing up there by herself

REGINA (*sharply*) Go upstairs and lay out Alexandra's things

ADDIE He'd expect me to be along—

REGINA I'll be up in a few minutes to tell you what to pack (*ADDIE slowly begins to climb the steps To ALEXANDRA*) I should think you'd like going alone At your age it certainly would have delighted me You're a strange girl, Alexandra Addie has babied you so much

ALEXANDRA I only thought it would be more fun if Addie and I went together

BIRDIE (*timidly*) Maybe I could go with her, Regina I'd really like to

REGINA She is going alone She isn't getting old enough to take some responsibilities

OSCAR She'd better learn now She's almost old enough to get married (*Jovially, to LEO, slapping him on shoulder*) Eh, son?

LEO Huh?

OSCAR (*annoyed with LEO for not understanding*) Old enough to get married, you're thinking, eh?

LEO Oh, yes, sir (*Feebly*) Lots of girls get married at Zan's age Look at Mary Prester and Johanna and—

REGINA Well, she's not getting married tomorrow But she is going to Baltimore tomorrow, so let's talk about that (*To ALEXANDRA*) You'll be glad to have Papa home again

ALEXANDRA I wanted to go before, Mama You remember that But you said *you* couldn't go, and that I couldn't go alone

REGINA I've changed my mind (*Too casually*) You're to tell Papa how much you missed him, and that he must come home now—for your sake Tell him that you *need* him home

ALEXANDRA Need him home? I don't understand

REGINA There is nothing for you to understand You are simply to say what I have told you

BIRDIE (*rises*) He may be too sick She couldn't do that—

ALEXANDRA Yes He may be too sick to travel I couldn't make him think he had to come home for me, if he is too sick to—

REGINA (*looks at her, sharply, challengingly*) You *couldn't* do what I tell you to do, Alexandra?

ALEXANDRA (*quietly*) No. I couldn't. If I thought it would hurt him

REGINA (*after a second's silence, smiles pleasantly*) But you are doing this for Papa's own good (*Takes ALEXANDRA's hand*) You must let me be the judge of his condition It's the best possible cure for him to come home and be taken care of here He mustn't stay there any longer and listen to those alarmist doctors You are doing this entirely for his sake Tell your papa that I want him to come home, that I miss him very much

ALEXANDRA (*slowly*) Yes, Mama

REGINA (*to the others Rises*) I must go and start getting Alexandra ready now Why don't you all go home?

BEN (*rises*) I'll attend to the railroad ticket One of the boys will bring it over Good night, everybody Have a nice trip, Alexandra The food on the train is very good The celery is so crisp Have a good time and act like a little lady (*Exits*)

REGINA Good night, Ben Good night, Oscar— (*Playfully*) Don't be so glum, Oscar It makes you look as if you had chronic indigestion

BIRDIE Good night, Regina

REGINA Good night, Birdie (*Exits upstairs*)

OSCAR (*starts for hall*) Come along.

LEO (*to ALEXANDRA*) Imagine your not wanting to go! What a little fool you are Wish it were me What I could do in a place like Baltimore!

ALEXANDRA (*angrily, looking away from him*). Mind your business I can guess the kind of things you could do

LEO (*laughs*) Oh, no, you couldn't (*He exits*)

REGINA (*calling from the top of the stairs*) Come on, Alexandra

BIRDIE (*quickly, softly*) Zan

ALEXANDRA I don't understand about my going, Aunt Birdie (*Shrugs*) But anyway, Papa will be home again (*Pats BIRDIE's arm*) Don't worry about me I can take care of myself Really I can

BIRDIE (*shakes her head, softly*) That's not what I'm worried about Zan—

ALEXANDRA (*comes close to her*) What's the matter?

BIRDIE It's about Leo—

ALEXANDRA (*whispering*) He beat the horses That's why we were late getting back We had to wait until they cooled off He always beats the horses as if—

BIRDIE (*whispering frantically, holding ALEXANDRA's hands*) He's my son My own son But you are more to me—more to me than my own child I love you more than anybody else—

ALEXANDRA Don't worry about the horses I'm sorry I told you

BIRDIE (*her voice rising*) I am not worrying about the horses. I am worrying about you You are not going to marry Leo I am not going to let them do that to you—

ALEXANDRA Marry? To Leo? (*Laughs*) I wouldn't marry, Aunt Birdie I've never even thought about it—

BIRDIE But they have thought about it (*Wildly*) Zan, I couldn't stand to think about such a thing You and—

(OSCAR has come into the doorway on ALEXANDRA's speech He is standing quietly, listening)

ALEXANDRA (*laughs*) But I'm not going to marry And I'm certainly not going to marry Leo

BIRDIE Don't you understand? They'll make you They'll make you—

ALEXANDRA (*takes BIRDIE's hands, quietly, firmly*) That's foolish, Aunt Birdie I'm grown now Nobody can make me do anything

BIRDIE I just couldn't stand—

OSCAR (*sharply*) Birdie (*BIRDIE looks up, draws quickly away from ALEXANDRA She stands rigid, frightened Quietly*) Birdie, get your hat and coat

ADDIE (*calls from upstairs*) Come on, baby Your mama's waiting for you, and she ain't nobody to keep waiting

ALEXANDRA All right (*Then softly, embracing BIRDIE*) Good night, Aunt Birdie (*As she passes OSCAR*) Good night, Uncle Oscar (*BIRDIE begins to move slowly towards the door as ALEXANDRA climbs the stairs ALEXANDRA is almost out of view when BIRDIE reaches OSCAR in the doorway As BIRDIE quickly attempts to pass him, he slaps her hard, across the face, BIRDIE cries out, puts her hand*

to her face On the cry, ALEXANDRA turns, begins to run down the stairs) Aunt Birdie! What happened? What happened? I—

BIRDIE (softly, without turning) Nothing, darling Nothing happened (Quickly, as if anxious to keep ALEX-

ANDRA from coming close) Now go to bed (OSCAR exits) Nothing happened (Turns to ALEXANDRA who is holding her hand) I only—I only twisted my ankle (She goes out ALEXANDRA stands on the stairs looking after her as if she were puzzled and frightened)

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE—Same as Act One A week later, morning

AT RISE—The light comes from the open shutter of the right window, the other shutters are tightly closed ADDIE is standing at the window, looking out Near the dining-room doors are brooms, mops, rags, etc After a second, OSCAR comes into the entrance hall, looks in the room, shivers, decides not to take his hat and coat off, comes into the room At the sound of the door, ADDIE turns to see who has come in

ADDIE (without interest) Oh, it's you, Mr Oscar

OSCAR What is this? It's not night What's the matter here? (Shivers) Fine thing at this time of the morning Blinds all closed (ADDIE begins to open shutters) Where's Miss Regina? It's cold in here

ADDIE Miss Regina ain't down yet

OSCAR She had any word?

ADDIE (wearily) No, sir

OSCAR Wouldn't you think a girl that age could get on a train at one place and have sense enough to get off at another?

ADDIE Something must have happened If Zan say she was coming last night, she's coming last night Unless something happened Sure fire disgrace to let a baby like that go all that way alone to bring home a sick man without—

OSCAR You do a lot of judging around here, Addie, eh? Judging of your white folks, I mean

ADDIE (looks at him, sighs) I'm tired I been up all night watching for them

REGINA (speaking from the upstairs hall) Who's downstairs, Addie? (She appears in a dressing gown, peers down from the landing ADDIE picks up broom, dustpan and brush

and exits) Oh, it's you, Oscar What are you doing here so early? I haven't been down yet I'm not finished dressing

OSCAR (*speaking up to her*) You had any word from them?

REGINA No

OSCAR Then something certainly has happened People don't just say they are arriving on Thursday night, and they haven't come by Friday morning

REGINA Oh, nothing has happened Alexandra just hasn't got sense enough to send a message

OSCAR If nothing's happened, then why aren't they here?

REGINA You asked me that ten times last night My, you do fret so, Oscar Anything might have happened They may have missed connections in Atlanta, the train may have been delayed—oh, a hundred things could have kept them

OSCAR Where's Ben?

REGINA (*as she disappears upstairs*) Where should he be? At home, probably Really, Oscar, I don't tuck him in his bed and I don't take him out of it Have some coffee and don't worry so much

OSCAR Have some coffee? There isn't any coffee (*Looks at his watch, shakes his head After a second CAL enters with a large silver tray, coffee urn, small cups, newspaper*) Oh, there you are Is everything in this fancy house always late?

CAL (*looks at him surprised*) You ain't out shooting this morning, Mr Oscar?

OSCAR First day I missed since I had my head cold First day I missed in eight years

CAL Yes, sir I bet you Simon he say you had a mighty good day yesterday morning That's what Simon say (*Brings OSCAR coffee and newspaper*)

OSCAR Pretty good, pretty good

CAL (*laughs, slyly*) Bet you got enough bobwhite and squirrel to give every nigger in town a Jesus-party Most of 'em ain't had no meat since the cotton picking was over Bet they'd give anything for a little piece of that meat—

OSCAR (*turns his head to look at CAL*) Cal, if I catch a nigger in this town going shooting, you know what's going to happen (*LEO enters*)

CAL (*hastily*) Yes, sir, Mr Oscar I didn't say nothing about nothing It was Simon who told me and— Morning, Mr Leo You gentlemen having your breakfast with us here?

LEO The boys in the bank don't know a thing They haven't had any message (*CAL waits for an answer, gets none, shrugs, moves to door, exits*)

OSCAR (*peers at LEO*) What you doing here, son?

LEO You told me to find out if the boys at the bank had any message from Uncle Horace or Zan—

OSCAR I told you if they had a message to bring it here I told you that if they didn't have a message to stay at the bank and do your work

LEO Oh, I guess I misunderstood

OSCAR You didn't misunderstand You just were looking for any excuse to take an hour off (*LEO pours a cup of coffee*) You got to stop that kind of thing You got to start settling down You going to be a married man one of these days

LEO Yes, sir

OSCAR You also got to stop with that woman in Mobile (*As LEO is about to speak*) You're young and I haven't got no objections to outside women That is, I haven't got no objections so long as they don't interfere with serious things Outside women are all right in their place, but now isn't their place You got to realize that

LEO (*nods*) Yes, sir I'll tell her She'll act all right about it

OSCAR Also, you got to start working harder at the bank You got to convince your Uncle Horace you going to make a fit husband for Alexandra

LEO What do you think has happened to them? Supposed to be here last night— (*Laughs*) Bet you Uncle Ben's mighty worried Seventy-five thousand dollars worried

OSCAR (*smiles happily*) Ought to be worried Damn well ought to be First he don't answer the letters, then he don't come home— (*Giggles*)

LEO What will happen if Uncle Horace don't come home or don't—

OSCAR Or don't put up the money? Oh, we'll get it from outside Easy enough

LEO (*surprised*) But you don't want outsiders

OSCAR What do I care who gets my share? I been shaved already Serve Ben right if he had to give away some of his

LEO Damn shame what they did to you

OSCAR (*looking up the stairs*) Don't talk so loud Don't you worry When I die, you'll have as much as the rest You might have yours and Alexandra's I'm not so easily licked

LEO I wasn't thinking of myself, Papa—

OSCAR Well, you should be, you should be It's every man's duty to think of himself

LEO You think Uncle Horace don't want to go in on this?

OSCAR (*giggles*) That's my hunch He hasn't showed any signs of loving it yet

LEO (*laughs*) But he hasn't listened to Aunt Regina yet, either Oh, he'll go along It's too good a thing Why wouldn't he want to? He's got plenty and plenty to invest with He don't even have to sell anything Eighty-eight thousand worth of Union Pacific bonds sitting right in his safe deposit box All he's got to do is open the box

OSCAR (*after a pause Looks at his watch*) Mighty late breakfast in this fancy house Yes, he's had those

bonds for fifteen years Bought them when they were low and just locked them up

LEO Yeah Just has to open the box an take them out That's all Easy as easy can be (*Laughs*) The things in that box! There's all those bonds, looking mighty fine (OSCAR slowly puts down his newspaper and turns to LEO) Then right next to them is a baby shoe of Zan's and a cheap old cameo on a string, and, and—nobody'd believe this—a piece of an old violin Not even a whole violin Just a piece of an old thing, a piece of a violin

OSCAR (*very softly, as if he were trying to control his voice*) A piece of a violin! What do you think of that!

LEO Yes, sirree A lot of other crazy things, too A poem, I guess it is, signed with his mother's name, and two old schoolbooks with notes and — (LEO catches OSCAR's look His voice trails off He turns his head away)

OSCAR (*very softly*) How do you know what's in the box, son?

LEO (*stops, draws back, frightened, realizing what he has said*) Oh, well Well, er Well, one of the boys, sir It was one of the boys at the bank He took old Manders' keys It was Joe Horns He just up and took Manders' keys and, and—well, took the box out (*Quickly*) Then they all asked me if I wanted to see, too So I looked a little, I guess, but then I made them close up the box quick and I told them never—

OSCAR (*looks at him*) Joe Horns, you say? He opened it?

LEO Yes, sir, yes, he did. My word of honor (*Very nervously, looking away*) I suppose that don't excuse me for looking— (*Looking at OSCAR*) but I did make him close it up and put the keys back in Manders' drawer—

OSCAR (*leans forward, very softly*) Tell me the truth, Leo I am not going to be angry with you Did you open the box yourself?

LEO No, sir, I didn't I told you I didn't No I—

OSCAR (*irritated, patient*) I am not going to be angry with you (*Watching LEO carefully*) Sometimes a young fellow deserves credit for looking round him to see what's going on Sometimes that's a good sign in a fellow your age (OSCAR rises) Many great men have made their fortune with their eyes Did you open the box?

LEO (*very puzzled*) No I—

OSCAR (*moves to LEO*) Did you open the box? It may have been—well, it may have been a good thing if you had

LEO (*after a long pause*) I opened it

OSCAR (*quickly*) Is that the truth? (LEO nods) Does anybody else know that you opened it? Come, Leo, don't be afraid of speaking the truth to me.

LEO No Nobody knew Nobody was in the bank when I did it But—

OSCAR. Did your Uncle Horace ever know you opened it?

LEO (*shakes his head*) He only looks in it once every six months when he cuts the coupons, and sometimes Manders even does that for him Uncle Horace don't even have the keys Manders keeps them for him Imagine not looking at all that You can bet if I had the bonds, I'd watch 'em like—

OSCAR If you had them (LEO *watches him*) If you had them Then you could have a share in the mill, you and me A fine, big share, too (*Pauses, shrugs*) Well, a man can't be shot for wanting to see his son get on in the world, can he, boy?

LEO (*looks up, begins to understand*) No, he can't Natural enough (*Laughs*) But I haven't got the bonds and Uncle Horace has And now he can just sit back and wait to be a millionaire

OSCAR (*innocently*) You think your Uncle Horace likes you well enough to lend you the bonds if he decides not to use them himself?

LEO Papa, it must be that you haven't had your breakfast! (*Laughs loudly*) Lend me the bonds! My God—

OSCAR (*disappointed*) No, I suppose not Just a fancy of mine A loan for three months, maybe four, easy enough for us to pay it back then Anyway, this is only April— (*Slowly counting the months on his fingers*) and if he doesn't look at them until Fall, he wouldn't even miss them out of the box

LEO That's it He wouldn't even miss them Ah, well—

OSCAR No, sir Wouldn't even miss 'em How could he miss them if he

never looks at them? (*Sighs as LEO stares at him*) Well, here we are sitting around waiting for him to come home and invest his money in something he hasn't lifted his hand to get But I can't help thinking he's acting strange You laugh when I say he could lend you the bonds if he's not going to use them himself But would it hurt him?

LEO (*slowly looking at OSCAR*) No No, it wouldn't

OSCAR People ought to help other people But that's not always the way it happens (*BEN enters, hangs his coat and hat in hall Very carefully*) And so sometimes you got to think of yourself (*As LEO stares at him, BEN appears in the doorway*) Morning, Ben

BEN (*coming in, carrying his newspaper*) Fine sunny morning Any news from the runaways?

REGINA (*on the staircase*) There's no news or you would have heard it Quite a convention so early in the morning, aren't you all? (*Goes to coffee urn*)

OSCAR You rising mighty late these days Is that the way they do things in Chicago society?

BEN (*looking at his paper*) Old Carter died up in Senateville Eighty-one is a good time for us all, eh? What do you think has really happened to Horace, Regina?

REGINA Nothing

BEN (*too casually*) You don't think maybe he never started from Baltimore and never intends to start?

REGINA (*irritated*) Of course they've started. Didn't I have a letter from Alexandra? What is so strange about people arriving late? He has that cousin in Savannah he's so fond of. He may have stopped to see him. They'll be along today some time, very flattered that you and Oscar are so worried about them.

BEN I'm a natural worrier. Especially when I am getting ready to close a business deal and one of my partners remains silent *and invisible*.

REGINA (*laughs*) Oh, is that it? I thought you were worried about Horace's health.

OSCAR Oh, that too. Who could help but worry? I'm worried. This is the first day I haven't shot since my head cold.

REGINA (*starts towards dining room*) Then you haven't had your breakfast. Come along. (OSCAR and LEO follow her.)

BEN Regina (*She turns at dining-room door*) That cousin of Horace's has been dead for years and, in any case, the train does not go through Savannah.

REGINA (*laughs, continues into dining room, seats herself*) Did he die? You're always remembering about people dying. (BEN rises) Now I intend to eat my breakfast in peace, and read my newspaper.

BEN (*goes towards dining room as he talks*) This is second breakfast for me. My first was bad. Celia ain't the cook she used to be. Too old to have taste any more. If she hadn't be-

longed to Mama, I'd send her off to the country. (OSCAR and LEO start to eat. BEN seats himself.)

LEO Uncle Horace will have some tales to tell, I bet. Baltimore is a lively town.

REGINA (*to CAL*) The grits isn't hot enough. Take it back.

CAL Oh, yes'm. (*Calling into kitchen as he exits*) Grits didn't hold the heat. Grits didn't hold the heat.

LEO When I was at school three of the boys and myself took a train once and went over to Baltimore. It was so big we thought we were in Europe. I was just a kid then—

REGINA I find it very pleasant. (ADDIE enters) to have breakfast alone. I hate chattering before I've had something hot. (CAL closes the dining-room doors) Do be still, Leo. (ADDIE comes into the room, begins gathering up the cups, carries them to the large tray. Outside there are the sounds of voices. Quickly ADDIE runs into the hall. A few seconds later she appears again in the doorway, her arm around the shoulders of HORACE GIDDENS, supporting him. HORACE is a tall man of about forty-five. He has been good looking, but now his face is tired and ill. He walks stiffly, as if it were an enormous effort, and carefully, as if he were unsure of his balance. ADDIE takes off his overcoat and hangs it on the hall tree. She then helps him to a chair.)

HORACE How are you, Addie? How have you been?

ADDIE I'm all right, Mr. Horace. I've just been worried about you.

(ALEXANDRA enters *She is flushed and excited, her hat awry, her face dirty. Her arms are full of packages, but she comes quickly to ADDIE*)

ALEXANDRA Now don't tell me how worried you were. We couldn't help it and there was no way to send a message.

ADDIE (*begins to take packages from ALEXANDRA*) Yes, sir, I was mighty worried.

ALEXANDRA We had to stop in Mobile overnight. Papa— (*Looks at him*) Papa didn't feel well. The trip was too much for him, and I made him stop and rest— (*As ADDIE takes the last package*) No, don't take that. That's father's medicine. I'll hold it. It mustn't break. Now, about the stuff outside. Papa must have his wheel chair. I'll get that and the valises—

ADDIE (*very happy, holding ALEXANDRA's arms*) Since when you got to carry your own valises? Since when I ain't old enough to hold a bottle of medicine? (*HORACE coughs*) You feel all right, Mr. Horace?

HORACE (*nods*) Glad to be sitting down.

ALEXANDRA (*opening package of medicine*) He doesn't feel all right (*ADDIE looks at her, then at HORACE*) He just says that. The trip was very hard on him, and now he must go right to bed.

ADDIE (*looking at him carefully*) Them fancy doctors, they give you help?

HORACE They did their best.

ALEXANDRA (*has become conscious of the voices in the dining room*) I bet Mama was worried. I better tell her we're here now. (*She starts for door*)

HORACE Zan (*She stops*) Not for a minute, dear.

ALEXANDRA Oh, Papa, you feel bad again. I knew you did. Do you want your medicine?

HORACE No, I don't feel that way. I'm just tired, darling. Let me rest a little.

ALEXANDRA Yes, but Mama will be mad if I don't tell her we're here.

ADDIE They're all in there eating breakfast.

ALEXANDRA Oh, are they all here? Why do they *always* have to be here? I was hoping Papa wouldn't have to see anybody, that it would be nice for him and quiet.

ADDIE Then let your papa rest for a minute.

HORACE Addie, I bet your coffee's as good as ever. They don't have such good coffee up North. (*Looks at the urn*) Is it as good, Addie? (*ADDIE starts for coffee urn*)

ALEXANDRA No. Dr. Reeves said not much coffee. Just now and then. I'm the nurse now, Addie.

ADDIE You'd be a better one if you didn't look so dirty. Now go and take a bath, Miss Grown-up. Change your linens, get out a fresh dress and give your hair a good brushing—go on—

ALEXANDRA Will you be all right, Papa?

ADDIE Go on

ALEXANDRA (*on stairs, talks as she goes up*) The pills Papa must take once every four hours And the bottle only when—only if he feels very bad Now don't move until I come back and don't talk much and remember about his medicine, Addie—

ADDIE Ring for Belle and have her help you and then I'll make you a fresh breakfast

ALEXANDRA (*as she disappears*) How's Aunt Birdie? Is she here?

ADDIE It ain't right for you to have coffee? It will hurt you?

HORACE (*slowly*) Nothing can make much difference now Get me a cup, Addie (*She looks at him, crosses to urn, pours a cup*) Funny They can't make coffee up North (*ADDIE brings him a cup*) They don't like red pepper, either (*He takes the cup and gulps it greedily*) God, that's good You remember how I used to drink it? Ten, twelve cups a day So strong it had to stain the cup (*Then slowly*) Addie, before I see anybody else, I want to know why Zan came to fetch me home She's tried to tell me, but she doesn't seem to know herself

ADDIE (*turns away*) I don't know All I know is big things are going on Everybody going to be high-tone rich Big rich You too All because smoke's going to start out of a building that ain't even up yet

HORACE I've heard about it.

ADDIE And, er— (*Hesitates—steps to him*) And—well, Zan, she going to marry Mr Leo in a little while

HORACE (*looks at her, then very slowly*) What are you talking about?

ADDIE That's right That's the talk, God help us

HORACE (*angrily*) What's the talk?

ADDIE I'm telling you There's going to be a wedding— (*Angrily turns away*) Over my dead body there is

HORACE (*after a second, quietly*) Go and tell them I'm home

ADDIE (*hesitates*) Now you ain't to get excited. You're to be in your bed—

HORACE Go on, Addie Go and say I'm back (*ADDIE opens dining-room doors He rises with difficulty, stands stiff, as if he were in pain, facing the dining room*)

ADDIE Miss Regina They're home They got here—

REGINA Horace! (*REGINA quickly rises, runs into the room Warmly*) Horace! You've finally arrived (*As she kisses him, the others come forward, all talking together*)

BEN (*in doorway, carrying a napkin*) Well, sir, you had us all mighty worried (*He steps forward They shake hands ADDIE exits*)

OSCAR. You're a sight for sore eyes

HORACE Hello, Ben
(*LEO enters eating a biscuit.*)

OSCAR And how you feel? Tip-top, I bet, because that's the way you're looking

HORACE (*coldly, irritated with OSCAR's lie*) Hello, Oscar Hello, Leo, how are you?

LEO (*shaking hands*) I'm fine, sir But a lot better now that you're back

REGINA Now sit down What did happen to you and where's Alexandra? I am so excited about seeing you that I almost forgot about her

HORACE I didn't feel good, a little weak, I guess, and we stopped overnight to rest Zan's upstairs washing off the train dirt

REGINA Oh, I am so sorry the trip was hard on you I didn't think that—

HORACE Well, it's just as if I had never been away All of you here—

BEN Waiting to welcome you home (*BIRDIE bursts in She is wearing a flannel kimono and her face is flushed and excited*)

BIRDIE (*runs to him, kisses him*) Horace!

HORACE (*warmly pressing her arm*) I was just wondering where you were, Birdie

BIRDIE (*excited*) Oh, I would have been here I didn't know you were back until Simon said he saw the buggy (*She draws back to look at him Her face sobers*) Oh, you don't look well, Horace No, you don't

REGINA (*laughs*) Birdie, what a thing to say—

HORACE (*looking at OSCAR*) Oscar thinks I look very well

OSCAR (*annoyed Turns on LEO*) Don't stand there holding that biscuit in your hand

LEO Oh, well I'll just finish my breakfast, Uncle Horace, and then I'll give you all the news about the bank— (*He exits into the dining room*)

OSCAR And what is that costume you have on?

BIRDIE (*looking at HORACE*) Now that you're home, you'll feel better Plenty of good rest and we'll take such fine care of you (*Stops*) But where is Zan? I missed her so much

OSCAR I asked you what is that strange costume you're parading around in?

BIRDIE (*nervously, backing towards stairs*) Me? Oh! It's my wrapper I was so excited about Horace I just rushed out of the house—

OSCAR Did you come across the square dressed that way? My dear Birdie, I—

HORACE (*to REGINA, wearily*) Yes, it's just like old times

REGINA (*quickly to OSCAR*) Now, no fights This is a holiday

BIRDIE (*runs quickly up the stairs*) Zan! Zannie!

OSCAR Birdie! (*She stops*)

BIRDIE Oh Tell Zan I'll be back in a little while (*Whispers*) Sorry, Oscar (*Exits*)

REGINA (to OSCAR and BEN) Why don't you go finish your breakfast and let Horace rest for a minute?

BEN (crossing to dining room with OSCAR) Never leave a meal unfinished. There are too many poor people who need the food. Mighty glad to see you home, Horace. Fine to have you back. Fine to have you back.

OSCAR (to LEO as BEN closes dining-room doors) Your mother has gone crazy. Running around the streets like a woman—
(The moment REGINA and HORACE are alone, they become awkward and self-conscious)

REGINA (laughs awkwardly) Well. Here we are. It's been a long time (HORACE smiles) Five months. You know, Horace, I wanted to come and be with you in the hospital, but I didn't know where my duty was. Here, or with you. But you know how much I wanted to come.

HORACE That's kind of you, Regina. There was no need to come.

REGINA Oh, but there was. Five months lying there all by yourself, no kinfolks, no friends. Don't try to tell me you didn't have a bad time of it.

HORACE I didn't have a bad time (As she shakes her head, he becomes insistent) No, I didn't, Regina. Oh, at first when I—when I heard the news about myself—but after I got used to that, I liked it there.

REGINA You liked it? (Coldly) Isn't that strange? You liked it so well you didn't want to come home?

HORACE That's not the way to put it (Then, kindly, as he sees her turn her head away) But there I was and I got kind of used to it, kind of to like lying there and thinking (Smiles) I never had much time to think before. And time's become valuable to me.

REGINA It sounds almost like a holiday.

HORACE (laughs) It was, sort of. The first holiday I've had since I was a little kid.

REGINA And here I was thinking you were in pain and—

HORACE (quietly) I was in pain.

REGINA And instead you were having a holiday! A holiday of thinking. Couldn't you have done that here?

HORACE I wanted to do it before I came here. I was thinking about us.

REGINA About us? About you and me? Thinking about you and me after all these years (Unpleasantly) You shall tell me everything you thought—some day.

HORACE (there is silence for a minute) Regina (She turns to him) Why did you send Zan to Baltimore?

REGINA Why? Because I wanted you home. You can't make anything suspicious out of that, can you?

HORACE I didn't mean to make anything suspicious about it (Hesitantly, taking her hand) Zan said you wanted me to come home. I was so pleased at that and touched, it made me feel good.

REGINA (*taking away her hand, turns*) Touched that I should want you home?

HORACE (*sighs*) I'm saying all the wrong things as usual! Let's try to get along better. There isn't so much more time. Regina, what's all this crazy talk I've been hearing about Zan and Leo? Zan and Leo marrying?

REGINA (*turning to him, sharply*) Who gossips so much around here?

HORACE (*shocked*) Regina!

REGINA (*annoyed, anxious to quiet him*) It's some foolishness that Oscar thought up. I'll explain later. I have no intention of allowing any such arrangement. It was simply a way of keeping Oscar quiet in all this business I've been writing you about—

HORACE (*carefully*) What has Zan to do with any business of Oscar's? Whatever it is, you had better put it out of Oscar's head immediately. You know what I think of Leo.

REGINA But there's no need to talk about it now.

HORACE. There is no need to talk about it ever. Not as long as I live. (*HORACE stops, slowly turns to look at her*) As long as I live I've been in a hospital for five months. Yet since I've been here you have not once asked me about—about my health. (*Then gently*) Well, I suppose they've written you. I can't live very long.

REGINA (*coldly*) I've never understood why people have to talk about this kind of thing.

HORACE (*there is a silence. Then he looks up at her, his face cold*) You misunderstand. I don't intend to gossip about my sickness. I thought it was only fair to tell you. I was not asking for your sympathy.

REGINA (*sharply, turns to him*) What do the doctors think caused your bad heart?

HORACE What do you mean?

REGINA They didn't think it possible, did they, that your fancy women may have—

HORACE (*smiles unpleasantly*) Caused my heart to be bad? I don't think that's the best scientific theory. You don't catch heart trouble in bed.

REGINA (*angrily*) I didn't think you did. I only thought you might catch a bad conscience—in bed, as you say.

HORACE I didn't tell them about my bad conscience. Or about my fancy women. Nor did I tell them that my wife has not wanted me in bed with her for— (*Sharply*) How long is it, Regina? (*REGINA turns to him*) Ten years? Did you bring me home for this, to make me feel guilty again? That means you want something. But you'll not make me feel guilty any more. My "thinking" has made a difference.

REGINA I see that it has. (*She looks towards dining-room door. Then comes to him, her manner warm and friendly*) It's foolish for us to fight this way. I didn't mean to be unpleasant. I was stupid.

HORACE (*wearily*) God knows I didn't either. I came home wanting so much not to fight, and then all of

a sudden there we were I got hurt and—

REGINA (*hastily*) It's all my fault I didn't ask about—about your illness because I didn't want to remind you of it. Anyway I never believe doctors when they talk about— (*Brightly*) when they talk like that

HORACE (*not looking at her*) Well, we'll try our best with each other (*He rises*)

REGINA (*quickly*) I'll try Honestly, I will Horace, Horace, I know you're tired but, but—couldn't you stay down here a few minutes longer? I want Ben to tell you something

HORACE TOMORROW

REGINA I'd like to now It's very important to me It's very important to all of us (*Gaily, as she moves toward dining room*) Important to your beloved daughter She'll be a very great heiress—

HORACE Will she? That's nice

REGINA (*opens doors*) Ben, are you finished breakfast?

HORACE Is this the mill business I've had so many letters about?

REGINA (*to BEN*) Horace would like to talk to you now

HORACE Horace would not like to talk to you now I am very tired, Regina—

REGINA (*comes to him*) Please You've said we'll try our best with each other I'll try Really, I will Please do this for me now You will see what I've done while you've been

away How I watched your interests. (*Laughs gaily*) And I've done very well too But things can't be delayed any longer Everything must be settled this week— (*HORACE sits down. BEN enters OSCAR has stayed in the dining room, his head turned to watch them. LEO is pretending to read the newspaper*) Now you must tell Horace all about it Only be quick because he is very tired and must go to bed (*HORACE is looking up at her, His face hardens as she speaks*) But I think your news will be better for him than all the medicine in the world

BEN (*looking at HORACE*) It could wait Horace may not feel like talking today

REGINA What an old faker you are! You know it can't wait You know it must be finished this week You've been just as anxious for Horace to get here as I've been

BEN (*very jovial*) I suppose I have been And why not? Horace has done Hubbard Sons many a good turn Why shouldn't I be anxious to help him now?

REGINA (*laughs*) Help him! Help him when you need him, that's what you mean

BEN What a woman you married, Horace! (*Laughs awkwardly when HORACE does not answer*) Well, then I'll make it quick You know what I've been telling you for years How I've always said that every one of us little Southern business men had great things— (*Extends his arm, right beyond our finger tips*) It's been my dream— my dream to make those fingers grows longer I'm a lucky man, Horace, a lucky man To dream and

to live to get what you've dreamed of That's *my* idea of a lucky man (*Looks at his fingers as his arm drops slowly*) For thirty years I've cried bring the cotton mills to the cotton (*HORACE opens medicine bottle*) Well, finally I got up nerve to go to Marshall Company in Chicago

HORACE I know all this (*He takes the medicine REGINA rises, steps to him*)

BEN Can I get you something?

HORACE Some water, please

REGINA (*turns quickly*) Oh, I'm sorry Let me (*Brings him a glass of water He drinks as they wait in silence*) You feel all right now?

HORACE Yes You wrote me I know all that (*OSCAR enters from dining room*)

REGINA (*triumphantly*) But you don't know that in the last few days Ben has agreed to give us—you, I mean—a much larger share

HORACE Really? That's very generous of him

BEN (*laughs*) It wasn't so generous of me It was smart of Regina

REGINA (*as if she were signaling HORACE*) I explained to Ben that perhaps you hadn't answered his letters because you didn't think he was offering you enough, and that the time was getting short and you could guess how much he needed you—

HORACE (*smiles at her, nods*) And I could guess that he wants to keep control in the family?

REGINA (*to BEN, triumphantly*) Exactly (*To HORACE*) So I did a little bargaining for you and convinced my brothers they weren't the only Hubbards who had a business sense

HORACE Did you have to convince them of that? How little people know about each other! (*Laughs*) But you'll know better about Regina next time, eh, Ben? (*BEN, REGINA, HORACE laugh together OSCAR's face is angry*) Now let's see We're getting a bigger share (*Looking at OSCAR*) Who's getting less?

BEN Oscar

HORACE Well, Oscar, you've grown very unselfish What's happened to you? (*LEO enters from dining room*)

BEN (*quickly, before OSCAR can answer*) Oscar doesn't mind Not worth fighting about now, eh, Oscar?

OSCAR (*angrily*) I'll get mine in the end You can be sure of that I've got my son's future to think about

HORACE (*sharply*) Leo? Oh, I see (*Puts his head back, laughs REGINA looks at him nervously*) I am beginning to see Everybody will get theirs

BEN I knew you'd see it Seventy-five thousand, and that seventy-five thousand will make you a million

REGINA (*steps to table, leaning forward*) It will, Horace, it will

HORACE I believe you (*After a second*) Now I can understand Oscar's self-sacrifice, but what did you have to promise Marshall Company besides the money you're putting up?

BEN They wouldn't take promises
They wanted guarantees

HORACE Of what?

BEN (*nods*) Water power Free and
plenty of it

HORACE You got them that, of course

BEN Cheap You'd think the Governor of a great state would make his price a little higher From pride, you know (*HORACE smiles BEN smiles*) Cheap wages "What do you mean by cheap wages?" I say to Marshall "Less than Massachusetts," he says to me, "and that averages eight a week" "Eight a week! By God," I tell him, "I'd work for eight a week myself" Why, there ain't a mountain white or a town nigger but wouldn't give his right arm for three silver dollars every week, eh, Horace?

HORACE Sure And they'll take less than that when you get around to playing them off against each other You can save a little money that way, Ben (*Angrily*) And make them hate each other just a little more than they do now

REGINA What's all this about?

BEN (*laughs*) There'll be no trouble from anybody, white or black Marshall said that to me "What about strikes? That's all we've had in Massachusetts for the last three years" I say to him, "What's a strike? I never heard of one Come South, Marshall We got good folks and we don't stand for any fancy fooling"

HORACE You're right (*Slowly*) Well, it looks like you made a good deal for yourselves, and for Marshall, too (*To BEN*) Your father used to

say he made the thousands and you boys would make the millions I think he was right (*Rises*)

REGINA (*They are all looking at HORACE She laughs nervously*), Millions for us, too

HORACE Us? You and me? I don't think so We've got enough money, Regina We'll just sit by and watch the boys grow rich (*They watch HORACE tensely as he begins to move towards the staircase He passes LEO, looks at him for a second*) How's everything at the bank, Leo?

LEO Fine, sir Everything is fine

HORACE How are all the ladies in Mobile? (*HORACE turns to REGINA, sharply*) Whatever made you think I'd let Zan marry—

REGINA Do you mean that you are turning this down? Is it possible that's what you mean?

BEN No, that's not what he means Turning down a fortune Horace is tired He'd rather talk about it to morrow—

REGINA We can't keep putting it off this way Oscar must be in Chicago by the end of the week with the money and contracts

OSCAR (*giggles, pleased*) Yes, sir Got to be there end of the week No sense going without the money

REGINA (*tensely*) I've waited long enough for your answer I'm not going to wait any longer

HORACE (*very deliberately*) I'm very tired now, Regina

BEN (*hustly*) Now, Horace probably has his reasons Things he'd like explained Tomorrow will do I can—

REGINA (*turns to BEN, sharply*) I want to know his reasons now! (*Turns back to HORACE*)

HORACE (*as he climbs the steps*) I don't know them all myself Let's leave it at that

REGINA We shall not leave it at that! We have waited for you here like children Waited for you to come home

HORACE So that you could invest my money So this is why you wanted me home? Well, I had hoped— (*Quietly*) If you are disappointed, Regina, I'm sorry But I must do what I think best We'll talk about it another day

REGINA We'll talk about it now Just you and me

HORACE (*looks down at her His voice is tense*) Please, Regina It's been a hard trip I don't feel well Please leave me alone now

REGINA (*quietly*) I want to talk to you, Horace I'm coming up (*He looks at her for a minute, then moves on again out of sight She begins to climb the stairs*)

BEN (*softly REGINA turns to him as he speaks*) Sometimes it is better to wait for the sun to rise again (*She does not answer*) And sometimes, as our mother used to tell you, (*REGINA starts up stairs*) it's unwise for a good-looking woman to frown (*BEN rises, moves towards stairs*) Softness and a smile do more to the heart of men— (*She disappears BEN stands looking*

up the stairs There is a long silence Then, suddenly, OSCAR giggles.)

OSCAR Let us hope she'll change his mind Let us hope (*After a second BEN crosses to table, picks up his newspaper OSCAR looks at BEN The silence makes LEO uncomfortable*)

LEO The paper says twenty-seven cases of yellow fever in New Orleans Guess the flood waters caused it (*Nobody pays attention*) Thought they were building the levees high enough Like the niggers always say a man born of woman can't build nothing high enough for the Mississippi (*Gets no answer Gives an embarrassed laugh*) (*Upstairs there is the sound of voices The voices are not loud, but BEN, OSCAR, LEO become conscious of them LEO crosses to landing, looks up, listens*)

OSCAR (*pointing up*) Now just suppose she don't change his mind? Just suppose he keeps on refusing?

BEN (*without conviction*) He's tired It was a mistake to talk to him today He's a sick man, but he isn't a crazy one

OSCAR (*giggles*) But just suppose he is crazy What then?

BEN (*puts down his paper, peers at OSCAR*) Then we'll go outside for the money There's plenty who would give it

OSCAR And plenty who will want a lot for what they give The ones who are rich enough to give will be smart enough to want That means we'd be working for them, don't it, Ben?

BEN You don't have to tell me the things I told you six months ago

OSCAR. Oh, you're right not to worry. She'll change his mind. She always has. *(There is a silence. Suddenly REGINA's voice becomes louder and sharper. All of them begin to listen now. Slowly BEN rises, goes to listen by the staircase. OSCAR, watching him, smiles. As they listen REGINA's voice becomes very loud. HORACE's voice is no longer heard.)* Maybe. But I don't believe it. I never did believe he was going in with us.

BEN *(turning on him)*. What the hell do you expect me to do?

OSCAR *(mildly)*. Nothing. You done your almighty best. Nobody could blame you if the whole thing just dripped away right through our fingers. You can't do a thing. But there may be something I could do for us. *(OSCAR rises.)* Or, I might better say, Leo could do for us. *(BEN stops, turns, looks at OSCAR. LEO is staring at OSCAR.)* Ain't that true, son? Ain't it true you might be able to help your own kinfolks?

LEO *(nervously taking a step to him)*. Papa, I—

BEN *(slowly)*. How would he help us, Oscar?

OSCAR. Leo's got a friend. Leo's friend owns eighty-eight thousand dollars in Union Pacific bonds. *(BEN turns to look at LEO.)* Leo's friend don't look at the bonds much—not for five or six months at a time.

BEN *(after a pause)*. Union Pacific. Uh, huh. Let me understand. Leo's friend would—would lend him these bonds and he—

OSCAR *(nods)*. Would be kind enough to lend them to us.

BEN. Leo.

LEO *(excited, comes to him)*. Yes, sir?

BEN. When would your friend be wanting the bonds back?

LEO *(very nervous)*. I don't know. I—well, I—

OSCAR *(sharply. Steps to him)*. You told me he won't look at them until Fall—

LEO. Oh, that's right. But I—not till Fall. Uncle Horace never—

BEN *(sharply)*. Be still.

OSCAR *(smiles at LEO)*. Your uncle doesn't wish to know your friend's name.

LEO *(starts to laugh)*. That's a good one. Not know his name—

OSCAR. Shut up, Leo! *(LEO turns away slowly, moves to table. BEN turns to OSCAR.)* He won't look at them again until September. That gives us five months. Leo will return the bonds in three months. And we'll have no trouble raising the money once the mills are going up. Will Marshall accept bonds?

(BEN stops to listen to sudden sharp voices from above. The voices are now very angry and very loud.)

BEN *(smiling)*. Why not? Why not? *(Laughs.)* Good. We are lucky. We'll take the loan from Leo's friend—I think he will make a safer partner than our sister. *(Nods towards stairs. Turns to LEO.)* How soon can you get them?

LEO. Today. Right now. They're in the safe-deposit box and—

BEN (*sharply*) I don't want to know where they are

OSCAR (*laughs*) We will keep it secret from you (*Pats BEN's arm*)

BEN (*smiles*) Good Draw a check for our part You can take the night train for Chicago Well, Oscar, (*Holds out his hand*) good luck to us

OSCAR Leo will be taken care of?

LEO I'm entitled to Uncle Horace's share I'd enjoy being a partner—

BEN (*turns to stare at him*) You would? You can go to hell, you little— (*Starts towards LEO*)

OSCAR (*nervously*) Now, now He didn't mean that I only want to be sure he'll get something out of all this

BEN Of course We'll take care of him We won't have any trouble about that I'll see you at the store

OSCAR (*nods*) That's settled then Come on, son (*Starts for door*)

LEO (*puts out his hand*) I didn't mean just that I was only going to say what a great day this was for me and— (*BEN ignores his hand*)

BEN Go on

(*LEO looks at him, turns, follows OSCAR out BEN stands where he is, thinking Again the voices upstairs can be heard REGINA's voice is high and furious BEN looks up, smiles winces at the noise*)

ALEXANDRA (*upstairs*) Mama—Mama—don't (*The noise of running footsteps is heard and ALEXANDRA comes running down the steps, speaking as she comes*) Uncle

Ben! Uncle Ben! Please go up Please make Mama stop Uncle Ben, he's sick, he's so sick How can Mama talk to him like that—please, make her stop She'll—

BEN Alexandra, you have a tender heart

ALEXANDRA (*crying*) Go on up, Uncle Ben, please—
(*Suddenly the voices stop A second later there is the sound of a door being slammed*)

BEN Now you see Everything is over Don't worry (*He starts for the door*) Alexandra, I want you to tell your mother how sorry I am that I had to leave And don't worry so, my dear Married folk frequently raise their voices, unfortunately (*He starts to put on his hat and coat as REGINA appears on the stairs*)

ALEXANDRA (*furiously*) How can you treat Papa like this? He's sick He's very sick Don't you know that? I won't let you

REGINA Mind your business, Alexandra (*To BEN Her voice is cold and calm*) How much longer can you wait for the money?

BEN (*putting on his coat*) He has refused? My, that's too bad

REGINA He will change his mind I'll find a way to make him What's the longest you can wait now?

BEN I could wait until next week But I can't wait until next week (*He giggles, pleased at the joke*) I could but I can't Could and can't Well, I must go now I'm very late — REGINA (*coming downstairs towards him*) You're not going I want to talk to you

BEN I was about to give Alexandra a message for you I wanted to tell you that Oscar is going to Chicago to-night, so we can't be here for our usual Friday supper

REGINA (*tensely*) Oscar is going to Chi— (*Softly*) What do you mean?

BEN Just that Everything is settled He's going on to deliver to Marshall—

REGINA (*taking a step to him*) I demand to know what— You are lying You are trying to scare me You haven't got the money How could you have it? You can't have— (**BEN laughs**) You will wait until I— (**HORACE comes into view on the landing**)

BEN You are getting out of hand Since when do I take orders from you?

REGINA Wait, you— (**BEN stops**) How can he go to Chicago? Did a ghost arrive with the money? (**BEN starts for the hall**) I don't believe you Come back here (**REGINA starts after him**) Come back here, you— (*The door slams She stops in the doorway, staring, her fists clenched After a pause she turns slowly*)

HORACE (*very quietly*) It's a great day when you and Ben cross swords I've been waiting for it for years

ALEXANDRA Papa, Papa, please go back! You will—

HORACE And so they don't need you, and so you will not have your millions, after all

REGINA (*turns slowly*) You hate to see anybody live now, don't you? You

hate to think that I'm going to be alive and have what I want

HORACE I should have known you'd think that was the reason

REGINA Because you're going to die and you know you're going to die.

ALEXANDRA (*shrilly*) Mama! Don't— Don't listen, Papa Just don't listen Go away —

HORACE Not to keep you from getting what you want Not even partly that (*Holding to the rail*) I'm sick of you, sick of this house, sick of my life here I'm sick of your brothers and their dirty tricks to make a dime There must be better ways of getting rich than cheating niggers on a pound of bacon Why should I give you the money? (*Very angrily*) To pound the bones of this town to make dividends for you to spend? You wreck the town, you and your brothers, you wreck the town and live on it Not me Maybe it's easy for the dying to be honest But it's not my fault I'm dying (**ADDIE enters, stands at door quietly**) I'll do no more harm now I've done enough I'll die my own way And I'll do it without making the world any worse I leave that to you

REGINA (*looks up at him slowly, calmly*) I hope you die I hope you die soon (*Smiles*) I'll be waiting for you to die

ALEXANDRA (*shrieking*) Papa! Don't— Don't listen— Don't—

ADDIE Come here, Zan Come out of this room

(**ALEXANDRA runs quickly to ADDIE, who holds her HORACE turns slowly and starts upstairs**)

ACT THREE

SCENE—*Same as Act One Two weeks later It is late afternoon and it is raining*

AT RISE—HORACE is sitting near the window in a wheel chair On the table next to him is a safe deposit box, and a small bottle of medicine BIRDIE and ALEXANDRA are playing the piano On a chair is a large sewing basket

BIRDIE (*counting for ALEXANDRA*)
One and two and three and four One
and two and three and four (*Nods*
—*turns to HORACE*) We once played
together, Horace Remember?

HORACE (*has been looking out of the window*) What, Birdie?

BIRDIE We played together You and me

ALEXANDER Papa used to play?

BIRDIE Indeed he did (*ADDIE appears at the door in a large kitchen apron She is wiping her hands on a towel*) He played the fiddle and very well, too

ALEXANDRA (*turns to smile at HORACE*) I never knew—

ADDIE Where's your mama?

ALEXANDRA Gone to Miss Saffronia's to fit her dresses
(*ADDIE nods, starts to exit*)

HORACE Addie

ADDIE Yes, Mr Horace

HORACE (*speaks as if he had made a sudden decision*) Tell Cal to get on

his things I want him to go an errand

(*ADDIE nods, exits HORACE moves nervously in his chair, looks out of the window*)

ALEXANDRA (*who has been watching him*) It's too bad it's been raining all day, Papa But you can go out in the yard tomorrow Don't be restless

HORACE I'm not restless, darling

BIRDIE I remember so well the time we played together, your papa and me It was the first time Oscar brought me here to supper I had never seen all the Hubbards together before, and you know what a ninny I am and how shy (*Turns to look at HORACE*) You said you could play the fiddle and you'd be much obliged if I'd play with you I was obliged to you, all right, all right (*Laughs when he does not answer her*) Horace, you haven't heard a word I've said

HORACE Birdie, when did Oscar get back from Chicago?

BIRDIE Yesterday Hasn't he been here yet?

ALEXANDRA (*stops playing*) No Neither has Uncle Ben since—since that day

BIRDIE Oh, I didn't know it was *that* bad Oscar never tells me anything—

HORACE (*smiles, nods*) The Hubbards have had their great quarrel I knew it would come some day (*Laughs*) It came

ALEXANDRA It came It certainly came all right

BIRDIE (*amazed*) But Oscar was in such a good humor when he got home, I didn't—

HORACE Yes, I can understand that (*ADDIE enters carrying a large tray with glasses, a carafe of elderberry wine and a plate of cookies, which she puts on the table*)

ALEXANDRA Addie! A party! What for?

ADDIE Nothing for I had the fresh butter, so I made the cakes, and a little elderberry does the stomach good in the rain

BIRDIE Isn't this nice! A party just for us Let's play party music, Zan (*ALEXANDRA begins to play a gay piece*)

ADDIE (*to HORACE, wheeling his chair to center*) Come over here, Mr Horace, and don't be thinking so much A glass of elderberry will do more good (*ALEXANDRA reaches for a cake BIRDIE pours herself a glass of wine*)

ALEXANDRA Good cakes, Addie It's nice here Just us Be nice if it could always be this way

BIRDIE (*nods happily*) Quiet and restful

ADDIE Well, it won't be that way long Little while now, even sitting here, you'll hear the red bricks going into place The next day the smoke'll be pushing out the chimneys and by church time that Sunday every human born of woman will be living on chicken That's how Mr Ben's been telling the story

HORACE (*looks at her*) They believe it that way?

ADDIE Believe it? They use to believing what Mr Ben orders There ain't been so much talk around here since Sherman's army didn't come near

HORACE (*softly*) They are fools

ADDIE (*nods, sits down with the sewing basket*) You ain't born in the South unless you're a fool

BIRDIE (*has drunk another glass of wine*) But we didn't play together after that night Oscar said he didn't like me to play on the piano (*Turns to ALEXANDRA*) You know what he said that night?

ALEXANDRA Who?

BIRDIE Oscar He said that music made him nervous He said he just sat and waited for the next note. (*ALEXANDRA laughs*) He wasn't poking fun He meant it Ah, well—(*She finishes her glass, shakes her head HORACE looks at her, smiles*) Your papa don't like to admit it, but he's been mighty kind to me all these years (*Running the back of her hand along his sleeve*) Often he'd step in when somebody said some-

thing and once— (*She stops, turns away, her face still*) Once he stopped Oscar from— (*She stops, turns Quickly*) I'm sorry I said that Why, here I am so happy and yet I think about bad things (*Laughs nervously*) That's not right, now, is it? (*She pours a drink CAL appears in the door He has on an old coat and is carrying a torn umbrella*)

ALEXANDRA Have a cake, Cal

CAL (*comes in, takes a cake*) Yes'm You want me, Mr Horace?

HORACE What time is it, Cal?

CAL 'Bout ten minutes before it's five

HORACE All right Now you walk yourself down to the bank

CAL It'll be closed Nobody'll be there but Mr Manders, Mr Joe Horns, Mr Leo—

HORACE Go in the back way They'll be at the table, going over the day's business (*Points to the deposit box*) See that box?

CAL (*nods*) Yes, sir

HORACE You tell Mr Manders that Mr Horace says he's much obliged to him for bringing the box, it arrived all right

CAL (*bewildered*) He know you got the box He bring it himself Wednesday I opened the door to him and he say, "Hello, Cal, coming on to summer weather"

HORACE You say just what I tell you Understand? (*BIRDIE pours another drink, stands at table*)

CAL No, sir I ain't going to say I understand I'm going down and tell a man he give you something he already know he give you, and you say "understand"

HORACE Now, Cal

CAL Yes, sir I just going to say you obliged for the box coming all right I ain't going to understand it, but I'm going to say it

HORACE And tell him I want him to come over here after supper, and to bring Mr Sol Fowler with him

CAL (*nods*) He's to come after supper and bring Mr Sol Fowler, your attorney-at-law, with him

HORACE (*smiles*) That's right Just walk right in the back room and say your piece (*Slowly*) In front of everybody

CAL Yes, sir (*Mumbles to himself as he exits*)

ALEXANDRA (*who has been watching HORACE*) Is anything the matter, Papa?

HORACE Oh, no Nothing

ADDIE. Miss Birdie, that elderberry going to give you a headache spell

BIRDIE (*beginning to be drunk Gaily*) Oh, I don't think so I don't think it will

ALEXANDRA (*as HORACE puts his hand to his throat*) Do you want your medicine, Papa?

HORACE No, no. I'm all right, darling

BIRDIE Mama used to give me elderberry wine when I was a little girl. For hiccoughs (*Laughs*) You know, I don't think people get hiccoughs any more. Isn't that funny? (BIRDIE laughs HORACE and ALEXANDRA laugh) I used to get hiccoughs just when I shouldn't have

ADDIE (*nods*) And nobody gets growing pains no more. That is funny. Just as if there was some style in what you get. One year an ailment's stylish and the next year it ain't.

BIRDIE (*turns*) I remember. It was my first big party, at Lionnet I mean, and I was so excited, and there I was with hiccoughs and Mama laughing (*Softly Looking at carafe*) Mama always laughed (*Picks up carafe*) A big party, a lovely dress from Mr. Worth in Paris, France, and hiccoughs (*Pours drink*) My brother pounding me on the back and Mama with the elderberry bottle, laughing at me. Everybody was on their way to come, and I was such a nunny, hiccoughing away (*Drinks*) You know, that was the first day I ever saw Oscar Hubbard. The Ballongs were selling their horses and he was going there to buy. He passed and lifted his hat—we could see him from the window—and my brother, to tease Mama, said maybe we should have invited the Hubbards to the party. He said Mama didn't like them because they kept a store, and he said that was old-fashioned of her (*Her face lights up*) And then, and then, I saw Mama angry for the first time in my life. She said that wasn't the reason. She said she was old-fashioned, but not that way. She said she was old-fashioned enough not to like people who killed animals they couldn't use, and who made their money charging awful interest to

poor, ignorant niggers and cheating them on what they bought. She was very angry, Mama was. I had never seen her face like that. And then suddenly she laughed and said, "Look, I've frightened Birdie out of the hiccoughs." (*Her head drops. Then softly*) And so she had. They were all gone (*Moves to sofa, sits*)

ADDIE Yeah, they got mighty well off cheating niggers. Well, there are people who eat the earth and eat all the people on it like in the Bible with the locusts. Then there are people who stand around and watch them eat it (*Softly*) Sometimes I think it ain't right to stand and watch them do it.

BIRDIE (*thoughtfully*) Like I say, if we could only go back to Lionnet. Everybody'd be better there. They'd be good and kind. I like people to be kind (*Pours drink*) Don't you, Horace, don't you like people to be kind?

HORACE Yes, Birdie.

BIRDIE (*very drunk now*) Yes, that was the first day I ever saw Oscar. Who would have thought—(*Quickly*) You all want to know something? Well, I don't like Leo. My very own son, and I don't like him (*Laughs, gaily*) My, I guess I even like Oscar more.

ALEXANDRA Why did you marry Uncle Oscar?

ADDIE (*sharply*) That's no question for you to be asking.

HORACE (*sharply*) Why not? She's heard enough around here to ask anything.

ALEXANDRA Aunt Birdie, why did you marry Uncle Oscar?

BIRDIE. I don't know I thought I liked him He was kind to me and I thought it was because he liked me too But that wasn't the reason— (*Wheels on ALEXANDRA*) Ask why he married me I can tell you that He's told it to me often enough

ADDIE (*leaning forward*) Miss Birdie, don't—

BIRDIE (*speaking very rapidly, tensely*) My family was good and the cotton on Lionnet's fields was better Ben Hubbard wanted the cotton and (*Rises*) Oscar Hubbard married it for him He was kind to me, then He used to smile at me He hasn't smiled at me since Everybody knew that's what he married me for (*ADDIE rises*) Everybody but me Stupid, stupid me

ALEXANDRA (*to HORACE, holding his hand, softly*) I see (*Hesitates*) Papa, I mean—when you feel better couldn't we go away? I mean, by ourselves Couldn't we find a way to go—

HORACE Yes, I know what you mean We'll try to find a way I promise you, darling

ADDIE (*moves to BIRDIE*) Rest a bit, Miss Birdie You get talking like this you'll get a headache and—

BIRDIE (*sharply, turning to her*) I've never had a headache in my life (*Begins to cry hysterically*) You know it as well as I do (*Turns to ALEXANDRA*) I never had a headache, Zan That's a lie they tell for me I drink All by myself, in my own room, by myself, I drink Then, when they want to hide it, they say, "Birdie's got a headache again"—

ALEXANDRA (*comes to her quickly*). Aunt Birdie.

BIRDIE (*turning away*) Even you won't like me now You won't like me any more

ALEXANDRA I love you I'll always love you

BIRDIE (*furiously*) Well, don't Don't love me Because in twenty years you'll just be like me They'll do all the same things to you (*Begins to laugh hysterically*) You know what? In twenty-two years I haven't had a whole day of happiness Oh, a little, like today with you all But never a single, whole day I say to myself, if only I had one more whole day, then— (*The laugh stops*) And that's the way you'll be And you'll trail after them, just like me, hoping they won't be so mean that day or say something to make you feel so bad—only you'll be worse off because you haven't got my Mama to remember— (*Turns away, her head drops* She stands quietly, swaying a little, holding onto the sofa ALEXANDRA leans down, puts her cheek on BIRDIE's arm)

ALEXANDRA (*to BIRDIE*) I guess we were all trying to make a happy day You know we sit around and try to pretend nothing's happened We try to pretend we are not here We make believe we are just by ourselves, some place else, and it doesn't seem to work (*Kisses BIRDIE's hand*) Come now, Aunt Birdie, I'll walk you home You and me (*She takes BIRDIE's arm* They move slowly out)

BIRDIE (*softly as they exit*) You and me

ADDIE (*after a minute*) Well. First time I ever heard Miss Birdie say a

word (HORACE looks at her) Maybe it's good for her I'm just sorry Zan had to hear it (HORACE moves his head as if he were uncomfortable) You feel bad, don't you? (He shrugs)

HORACE So you didn't want Zan to hear? It would be nice to let her stay innocent, like Birdie at her age Let her listen now Let her see everything How else is she going to know that she's got to get away? I'm trying to show her that I'm trying, but I've only got a little time left She can even hate me when I'm dead, if she'll only learn to hate and fear this

ADDIE. Mr Horace—

HORACE Pretty soon there'll be nobody to help her but you

ADDIE (crossing to him) What can I do?

HORACE Take her away

ADDIE How can I do that? Do you think they'd let me just go away with her?

HORACE I'll fix it so they can't stop you when you're ready to go You'll go, Addie?

ADDIE (after a second, softly) Yes, sir I promise (He touches her arm, nods)

HORACE (quietly) I'm going to have Sol Fowler make me a new will They'll make trouble, but you make Zan stand firm and Fowler'll do the rest Addie, I'd like to leave you something for yourself I always wanted to

ADDIE (laughs). Don't you do that, Mr. Horace A nigger woman in a

white man's will! I'd never get it nohow

HORACE I know But upstairs in the armoire drawer there's seventeen hundred dollar bills It's money left from my trip It's in an envelope with your name It's for you.

ADDIE Seventeen hundred dollar bills! My God, Mr Horace, I won't know how to count up that high (Shyly) It's mighty kind and good of you I don't know what to say for thanks—

CAL (appears in doorway) I'm back (No answer) I'm back

ADDIE So we see.

HORACE Well?

CAL Nothing I just went down and spoke my piece Just like you told me I say, "Mr Horace he thank you mightily for the safe box arriving in good shape and he say you come right after supper to his house and bring Mr Attorney-at-law Sol Fowler with you " Then I wipe my hands on my coat Every time I ever told a lie in my whole life, I wipe my hands right after Can't help doing it Well, while I'm wiping my hands, Mr Leo jump up and say to me, "What box? What you talking about?"

HORACE (smiles) Did he?

CAL And Mr Leo say he got to leave a little early cause he got something to do And then Mr Manders say Mr Leo should sit right down and finish up his work and stop acting like somebody made him Mr President So he sit down Now, just like I told you, Mr Manders was mighty surprised with the message because

he knows right well he brought the box— (*Points to box, sighs*) But he took it all right Some men take everything easy and some do not

HORACE (*puts his head back, laughs*) Mr Leo was telling the truth, he has got something to do I hope Manders don't keep him too long (*Outside there is the sound of voices* CAL enters) ADDIE crosses quickly to HORACE, puts basket on table, begins to wheel his chair towards the stairs (*Sharply*) No Leave me where I am

ADDIE But that's Miss Regina coming back

HORACE (*nods, looking at door*) Go away, Addie

ADDIE (*hesitates*) Mr Horace Don't talk no more today You don't feel well and it won't do no good—

HORACE (*as he hears footsteps in the hall*) Go on (*She looks at him for a second, then picks up her sewing from table and exits as REGINA comes in from hall* HORACE's chair is now so placed that he is in front of the table with the medicine REGINA stands in the hall, shakes umbrella, stands it in the corner, takes off her cloak and throws it over the banister *She stares at HORACE*)

REGINA (*as she takes off her gloves*) We had agreed that you were to stay in your part of this house and I in mine This room is my part of the house Please don't come down here again

HORACE I won't

REGINA (*crosses towards bell-cord*) I'll get Cal to take you upstairs

HORACE (*smiles*) Before you do I want to tell you that after all, we have invested our money in Hubbard Sons and Marshall, Cotton Manufacturers

REGINA (*stops, turns, stares at him*) What are you talking about? You haven't seen Ben— When did you change your mind?

HORACE I didn't change my mind I didn't invest the money (*Smiles*) It was invested for me

REGINA (*angrily*) What—?

HORACE I had eighty-eight thousand dollars' worth of Union Pacific bonds in that safe-deposit box They are not there now Go and look (*As she stares at him, he points to the box*) Go and look, Regina (*She crosses quickly to the box, opens it*) Those bonds are as negotiable as money

REGINA (*turns back to him*) What kind of joke are you playing now? Is this for my benefit?

HORACE I don't look in that box very often, but three days ago, on Wednesday it was, because I had made a decision—

REGINA I want to know what you are talking about

HORACE (*sharply*) Don't interrupt me again Because I had made a decision, I sent for the box The bonds were gone Eighty-eight thousand dollars gone (*He smiles at her*)

REGINA (*after a moment's silence, quietly*) Do you think I'm crazy enough to believe what you're saying?

HORACE (*shrugs*) Believe anything you like.

REGINA (*stares at him, slowly*) Where did they go to?

HORACE They are in Chicago With Mr Marshall, I should guess

REGINA What did they do? Walk to Chicago? Have you really gone crazy?

HORACE Leo took the bonds

REGINA (*turns sharply, then speaks softly, without conviction*) I don't believe it

HORACE (*leans forward*) I wasn't there but I can guess what happened There fine gentleman, to whom you were willing to marry your daughter, took the keys and opened the box You remember that the day of the fight Oscar went to Chicago? Well, he went with my bonds that his son Leo had stolen for him (*Pleasantly*) And for Ben, of course, too

REGINA (*slowly, nods*) When did you find out the bonds were gone?

HORACE Wednesday night

REGINA I thought that's what you said Why have you waited three days to do anything? (*Suddenly laughs*) This will make a fine story

HORACE (*nods*) Couldn't it?

REGINA (*still laughing*) A fine story to hold over their heads How could they be such fools? (*Turns to him*)

HORACE But I'm not going to hold it over their heads

REGINA (*the laugh stops*) What?

HORACE (*turns his chair to face her*) I'm going to let them keep the bonds—as a loan from you An eighty-eight thousand-dollar loan, they should be grateful to you They will be, I think

REGINA (*slowly, smiles*) I see You are punishing me But I won't let you punish me If you won't do anything, I will Now (*She starts for door*)

HORACE You won't do anything Be cause you can't (*REGINA stops*) I won't do you any good to make trouble because I shall simply say that I lent them the bonds

REGINA (*slowly*) You would do that?

HORACE Yes For once in your life I am tying your hands There is nothing for you to do (*There is silence Then she sits down*)

REGINA I see You are going to lend them the bonds and let them keep all the profit they make on them, and there is nothing I can do about it Is that right?

HORACE Yes

REGINA (*softly*) Why did you say that I was making this gift?

HORACE I was coming to that I am going to make a new will, Regina, leaving you eighty-eight thousand dollars in Union Pacific bonds The rest will go to Zan It's true that your brothers have borrowed your share for a little while After my death I advise you to talk to Ben and Oscar They won't admit anything and Ben, I think, will be smart enough to see that he's safe Because I knew about

the theft and said nothing Nor will I say anything as long as I live Is that clear to you?

REGINA (*nods, softly, without looking at him*) You will not say anything as long as you live

HORACE That's right And by that time they will probably have replaced your bonds, and then they'll belong to you and nobody but us will ever know what happened (*Stops, smiles*) They'll be around any minute to see what I am going to do I took good care to see that word reached Leo They'll be mighty relieved to know I'm going to do nothing and Ben will think it all a capital joke on you And that will be the end of that There's nothing you can do to them, nothing you can do to me

REGINA You hate me very much

HORACE No

REGINA Oh, I think you do (*Puts her head back, sighs*) Well, we haven't been very good together Anyway, I don't hate you either I have only contempt for you I've always had

HORACE From the very first?

REGINA I think so

HORACE I was in love with you But why did you marry me?

REGINA I was lonely when I was young

HORACE You were lonely?

REGINA Not the way people usually mean Lonely for all the things I wasn't going to get Everybody in this

house was so busy and there was so little place for what I wanted. I wanted the world Then, and then— (*Smiles*) Papa died and left the money to Ben and Oscar

HORACE And you married me?

REGINA Yes, I thought— But I was wrong You were a small-town clerk then You haven't changed

HORACE (*nods, smiles*) And that wasn't what you wanted

REGINA No No, it wasn't what I wanted (*Pauses, leans back, pleasantly*) It took me a little while to find out I had made a mistake As for you—I don't know It was almost as if I couldn't stand the kind of man you were— (*Smiles, softly*) I used to lie there at night, praying you wouldn't come near—

HORACE Really? It was as bad as that?

REGINA (*nods*) Remember when I went to Doctor Sloan and I told you he said there was something the matter with me and that you shouldn't touch me any more?

HORACE I remember

REGINA But you believed it I couldn't understand that I couldn't understand that anybody could be such a soft fool That was when I began to despise you

HORACE (*puts his hand to his throat, looks at the bottle of medicine on table*) Why didn't you leave me?

REGINA I told you I married you for something It turned out it was only

for this. (*Carefully*) This wasn't what I wanted, but it was something I never thought about it much but if I had (*HORACE puts his hand to his throat*) I'd have known that you would die before I would But I couldn't have known that you would get heart trouble so early and so bad I'm lucky, Horace I've always been lucky (*HORACE turns slowly to the medicine*) I'll be lucky again (*HORACE looks at her* Then he puts his hand to his throat Because he cannot reach the bottle he moves the chair closer He reaches for the medicine, takes out the cork, picks up the spoon The bottle slips and smashes on the table He draws in his breath, gasps)

HORACE Please Tell Addie— The other bottle is upstairs (*REGINA has not moved* She does not move now He stares at her Then, suddenly as if he understood, he raises his voice It is a panic-stricken whisper, too small to be heard outside the room) Addie! Addie! Come— (*Stops as he hears the softness of his voice* He makes a sudden, furious spring from the chair to the stairs, taking the first few steps as if he were a desperate runner On the fourth step he slips, gasps, grasps the rail, makes a great effort to reach the landing When he reaches the landing, he is on his knees His knees give way, he falls on the landing, out of view REGINA has not turned during his climb up the stairs Now she waits a second Then she goes below the landing, speaks up)

REGINA Horace Horace (*When there is no answer, she turns, calls*) Addie! Cal! Come in here (*She starts up the steps ADDIE and CAL appear Both run towards the stairs*) He's had an attack Come up here. (*They run up the steps quickly*)

CAL. My God Mr Horace—
(*They cannot be seen now*)

REGINA (*her voice comes from the head of the stairs*) Be still, Cal. Bring him in here
(*Before the footsteps and the voices have completely died away, ALEXANDRA appears in the hall door, in her raincloak and hood* She comes into the room, begins to unfasten the cloak, suddenly looks around, sees the empty wheel chair, stares, begins to move swiftly as if to look in the dining room At the same moment ADDIE runs down the stairs ALEXANDRA turns and stares up at ADDIE)

ALEXANDRA Addie! What?

ADDIE (*takes ALEXANDRA by the shoulders*) I'm going for the doctor Go upstairs (*ALEXANDRA looks at her, then quickly breaks away and runs up the steps* ADDIE exits The stage is empty for a minute Then the front-door bell begins to ring When there is no answer, it rings again A second later LEO appears in the hall, talking as he comes in)

LEO (*very nervous*) Hello (*Irritably*) Never saw any use ringing a bell when a door was open If you are going to ring a bell, then somebody should answer it (*Gets in the room, looks around, puzzled, listens, hears no sound*) Aunt Regina (*He moves around restlessly*) Addie (*Waits*) Where the hell— (*Crosses to the bell cord, rings it impatiently, waits, gets no answer, calls*) Cal! Cal! (*CAL appears on the stair landing*)

CAL (*his voice is soft, shaken*) Mr LEO Miss Regina says you stop that screaming noise

LEO (*angrily*) Where is everybody?

BEN I don't know I don't know

CAL Mr Horace he got an attack
He's bad Miss Regina says you stop
that noise

OSCAR (*shakes his head*) But he was
all right—

LEO (*yelling*) Will you listen to me?

OSCAR (*sharply*) What is the mat-
ter with you?

LEO I been trying to tell you I been
trying to find you for an hour—

OSCAR Tell me what?

LEO Uncle Horace— What— What
happened? (CAL starts down the
stairs, shakes his head, begins to
move swiftly off LEO looks around
wildly) But when— You seen Mr
Oscar or Mr Ben? (CAL shakes his
head Moves on LEO grabs him by
the arm) Answer me, will you?

LEO Uncle Horace knows about the
bonds He knows about them He's
had the box since Wednesday—

CAL No, I ain't seen 'em I ain't got
time to answer you I got to get
things (CAL runs off)

BEN (*sharply*) Stop shouting! What
the hell are you talking about?

LEO But what's the matter with him?
When did this happen— (*Calling
after CAL*) You'd think Papa'd be
some place where you could find him
I been chasing him all afternoon
(OSCAR and BEN come into the room,
talking excitedly)

LEO (*furiously*) I'm telling you he
knows about the bonds Ain't that
clear enough—

OSCAR I hope it's not a bad attack

OSCAR (*grabbing LEO's arm*) You
God-damn fool! Stop screaming!

BEN. It's the first one he's had since
he came home

BEN Now what happened? Talk
quietly

LEO Papa, I've been looking all over
town for you and Uncle Ben—

LEO You heard me Uncle Horace
knows about the bonds He's known
since Wednesday

BEN Where is he?

BEN (*after a second*) How do you
know that?

OSCAR Addie said it was sudden

BEN (*to LEO*) Where is he? When
did it happen?

LEO Because Cal comes down to
Manders and says the box came O K
and—

LEO Upstairs Will you listen to me,
please? I been looking for you for—

OSCAR (*trembling*) That might not
mean a thing—

OSCAR (*to BEN*) You think we should
go up? (BEN, looking up the steps,
shakes his head)

LEO (*angrily*) No? It might not,
huh? Then he says Manders should
come here tonight and bring Sol

Fowler with him I guess that don't mean a thing either

OSCAR (to BEN) Ben— What— Do you think he's seen the—

BEN (*motions to the box*) There's the box (*Both OSCAR and LEO turn sharply LEO makes a leap to the box*) You ass Put it down What are you going to do with it, eat it?

LEO I'm going to— (*Starts*)

BEN (*furiously*) Put it down Don't touch it again Now sit down and shut up for a minute

OSCAR Since Wednesday (*To LEO*) You said he had it since Wednesday Why didn't he say something— (*To BEN*) I don't understand—

LEO (*taking a step*) I can put it back I can put it back before anybody knows

BEN (*who is standing at the table, softly*) He's had it since Wednesday Yet he hasn't said a word to us

OSCAR Why? Why?

LEO What's the difference why? He was getting ready to say plenty He was going to say it to Fowler tonight—

OSCAR (*angrily*) Be still (*Turns to BEN, looks at him, waits*)

BEN (*after a minute*) I don't believe that

LEO (*wildly*) You don't believe it? What do I care what you believe? I do the dirty work and then—

BEN (*turning his head sharply to LEO*) I'm remembering that I'm remembering that, Leo

OSCAR What do you mean?

LEO You—

BEN (*to OSCAR*) If you don't shut that little fool up, I'll show you what I mean For some reason he knows, but he don't say a word

OSCAR Maybe he didn't know that we—

BEN (*quickly*) That Leo— He's no fool Does Manders know the bonds are missing?

LEO How could I tell? I was half crazy I don't think so Because Manders seemed kind of puzzled and—

OSCAR But we got to find out— (*He breaks off as CAL comes into the room carrying a kettle of hot water*)

BEN How is he, Cal?

CAL I don't know, Mr Ben He was bad (*Going towards stairs*)

OSCAR But when did it happen?

CAL (*shrugs*) He wasn't feeling bad early (*ADDIE comes in quickly from the hall*) Then there he is next thing on the landing, fallen over, his eyes tight—

ADDIE (*to CAL*) Dr Sloan's over at the Ballongs Hitch the buggy and go get him (*She takes the kettle and cloths from him, pushes him, runs up the stairs*) Go on (*She disappears CAL exits*)

BEN Never seen Sloan anywhere when you need him

OSCAR (*softly*) Sounds bad.

LEO He would have told *her* about Aunt Regina He would have told his own wife—

BEN (*turning to LEO*) Yes, he might have told her But they weren't on such pretty terms and maybe he didn't Maybe he didn't (*Goes quickly to LEO*) Now, listen to me If she doesn't know, it may work out all right If she does know, you're to say he lent you the bonds

LEO Lent them to me! Who's going to believe that?

BEN Nobody

OSCAR (*to LEO*) Don't you understand? It can't do no harm to say it—

LEO Why should I say he lent them to me? Why not to you? (*Carefully*) Why not to Uncle Ben?

BEN (*smiles*) Just because he didn't lend them to me Remember that

LEO But all he has to do is say he didn't lend them to me—

BEN (*furiously*) But for some reason, he doesn't seem to be talking, does he?

(*There are footsteps above They all stand looking at the stairs REGINA begins to come slowly down*)

BEN What happened?

REGINA He's had a bad attack

OSCAR Too bad I'm so sorry we weren't here when—when Horace needed us

BEN When *you* needed us

REGINA (*looks at him*) Yes

BEN How is he? Can we—can we go up?

REGINA (*shakes her head*) He's not conscious

OSCAR (*pacing around*) It's that—it's that bad? Wouldn't you think Sloan could be found quickly, just once, just once?

REGINA I don't think there is much for him to do

BEN Oh, don't talk like that He's come through attacks before He will now

(*REGINA sits down After a second she speaks softly*)

REGINA Well We haven't seen each other since the day of our fight

BEN (*tenderly*) That was nothing Why, you and Oscar and I used to fight when we were kids

OSCAR (*hurriedly*) Don't you think we should go up? Is there anything we can do for Horace—

BEN You don't feel well Ah—

REGINA (*without looking at them*) No, I don't (*Slight pause*) Horace told me about the bonds this afternoon (*There is an immediate shocked silence*)

LEO The bonds What do you mean? What bonds? What—

BEN (*looks at him furiously Then to REGINA*) The Union Pacific bonds? Horace's Union Pacific bonds?

REGINA Yes

OSCAR (*steps to her, very nervously*)
Well Well what—what about them?
What—what could he say?

REGINA He said that Leo had stolen
the bonds and given them to you

OSCAR (*aghast, very loudly*) That's
ridiculous, Regina, absolutely—

LEO I don't know what you're talk-
ing about What would I— Why—

REGINA (*wearily to BEN*) Isn't it
enough that he stole them from me?
Do I have to listen to this in the
bargain?

OSCAR You are talking—

LEO I didn't steal anything I don't
know why—

REGINA (*to BEN*) Would you ask
them to stop that, please?
(*There is silence for a minute BEN*
glowers at OSCAR and LEO)

BEN Aren't we starting at the wrong
end, Regina? What did Horace tell
you?

REGINA (*smiles at him*) He told me
that Leo had stolen the bonds

LEO I didn't steal—

REGINA Please Let me finish Then
he told me that he was going to pre-
tend that he had lent them to you
(*LEO turns sharply to REGINA, then*
looks at OSCAR, then looks back at
REGINA) as a present from me—to my
brothers He said there was nothing
I could do about it He said the rest
of his money would go to Alexan-
dra That is all
(*There is a silence OSCAR coughs,*
LEO smiles slyly)

LEO (*taking a step to her*). I told you
he had lent them— I could have told
you—

REGINA (*ignores him, smiles sadly at*
BEN) So I'm very badly off, you see
(*Carefully*) But Horace said there
was nothing I could do about it as
long as he was alive to say he had
lent you the bonds

BEN You shouldn't feel that way It
can all be explained, all be adjusted
It isn't as bad—

REGINA. So you, at least, are willing
to admit that the bonds were stolen?

BEN (*OSCAR laughs nervously*) I ad-
mit no such thing It's possible that
Horace made up that part of the
story to tease you— (*Looks at her*)
Or perhaps to punish you Punish
you

REGINA (*sadly*) It's not a pleasant
story I feel bad, Ben, naturally I
hadn't thought—

BEN Now you shall have the bonds
safely back That was the under-
standing, wasn't it, Oscar?

OSCAR Yes

REGINA I'm glad to know that
(*Smiles*) Ah, I had greater hopes—

BEN Don't talk that way That's
foolish (*Looks at his watch*) I think
we ought to drive out for Sloan our-
selves If we can't find him we'll go
over to Senateville for Doctor Mor-
ris And don't think I'm dismissing
this other business I'm not We'll
have it all out on a more appropriate
day

REGINA (*looks up, quietly*) I don't think you had better go yet I think you had better stay and sit down

BEN We'll be back with Sloan

REGINA Cal has gone for him I don't want you to go

BEN Now don't worry and—

REGINA You will come back in this room and sit down I have something more to say

BEN (*turns, comes towards her*) Since when do I take orders from you?

REGINA (*smiles*) You don't—yet (*Sharply*) Come back, Oscar You too, Leo

OSCAR (*sure of himself, laughs*) My dear Regina—

BEN (*softly, pats her hand*) Horace has already clipped your wings and very wittily Do I have to clip them, too? (*Smiles at her*) You'd get farther with a smile, Regina I'm a soft man for a woman's smile

REGINA I'm smiling, Ben I'm smiling because you are quite safe while Horace lives But I don't think Horace will live And if he doesn't live I shall want seventy-five per cent in exchange for the bonds

BEN (*steps back, whistles, laughs*) Greedy! What a greedy girl you are! You want so much of everything

REGINA Yes And if I don't get what I want I am going to put all three of you in jail

OSCAR (*furiously*) You're mighty crazy Having just admitted—

BEN And on what evidence would you put Oscar and Leo in jail?

REGINA (*laughs, gaily*) Oscar, listen to him He's getting ready to swear that it was you and Leo! What do you say to that? (*OSCAR turns furiously towards BEN*) Oh, don't be angry, Oscar I'm going to see that he goes in with you

BEN Try anything you like, Regina (*Sharply*) And now we can stop all this and say good-bye to you (*ALEXANDRA comes slowly down the steps*) It's his money and he's obviously willing to let us borrow it (*More pleasantly*) Learn to make threats when you can carry them through For how many years have I told you a good-looking woman gets more by being soft and appealing? Mama used to tell you that (*Looks at his watch*) Where the hell is Sloan? (*To OSCAR*) Take the buggy and— (*As BEN turns to OSCAR, he sees ALEXANDRA She walks stiffly She goes slowly to the lower window, her head bent They all turn to look at her*)

OSCAR (*after a second, moving toward her*) What? Alexandra— (*She does not answer After a second, ADDIE comes slowly down the stairs, moving as if she were very tired At foot of steps, she looks at ALEXANDRA, then turns and slowly crosses to door and exits REGINA rises BEN looks nervously at ALEXANDRA, at REGINA*)

OSCAR (*as ADDIE passes him, irritably to ALEXANDRA*) Well, what is— (*Turns into room—sees ADDIE at foot of steps*) What's— (*BEN puts up a hand, shakes his head*) My God, I didn't know—who could have known—I didn't know he was that sick. Well, well—I—

(REGINA stands quietly, her back to them)

BEN (softly, sincerely) Seems like yesterday when he first came here

OSCAR (sincerely, nervously) Yes, that's true (Turns to BEN) The whole town loved him and respected him

ALEXANDRA (turns) Did you love him, Uncle Oscar?

OSCAR Certainly, I— What a strange thing to ask! I—

ALEXANDRA Did you love him, Uncle Ben?

BEN (simply) He had—

ALEXANDRA (suddenly starts to laugh very loudly) And you, Mama, did you love him, too?

REGINA I know what you feel, Alexandra, but please try to control yourself

ALEXANDRA (still laughing) I'm trying, Mama I'm trying very hard

BEN Grief makes some people laugh and some people cry It's better to cry, Alexandra

ALEXANDRA (the laugh has stopped Tensely moves toward REGINA) What was Papa doing on the staircase?
(BEN turns to look at ALEXANDRA)

REGINA Please go and lie down, my dear We all need time to get over shocks like this (ALEXANDRA does not move REGINA's voice becomes softer, more insistent) Please go, Alexandra

ALEXANDRA No, Mama. I'll wait I've got to talk to you

REGINA Later Go and rest now

ALEXANDRA (quietly) I'll wait, Mama I've plenty of time

REGINA (hesitates, stares, makes a half shrug, turns back to BEN) As I was saying Tomorrow morning I am going up to Judge Simmes I shall tell him about Leo

BEN (motioning toward ALEXANDRA) Not in front of the child, Regina I—

REGINA (turns to him Sharply) I didn't ask her to stay Tomorrow morning I go to Judge Simmes—

OSCAR And what proof? What proof of all this—

REGINA (turns sharply) None I won't need any The bonds are missing and they are with Marshall That will be enough If it isn't, I'll add what's necessary

BEN I'm sure of that

REGINA (turns to BEN) You can be quite sure

OSCAR We'll deny—

REGINA Deny your heads off You couldn't find a jury that wouldn't weep for a woman whose brothers steal from her And you couldn't find twelve men in this state you haven't cheated and hate you for it

OSCAR What kind of talk is this? You couldn't do anything like that! We're your own brothers (Points upstairs) How can you talk that way when upstairs not five minutes ago—

REGINA (*slowly*) There are people who can never go back, who must finish what they start. I am one of those people, Oscar. (*After a slight pause*) Where was I? (*Smiles at BEN*) Well, they'll convict you. But I won't care much if they don't. (*Leans forward, pleasantly*) Because by that time you'll be ruined. I shall also tell my story to Mr. Marshall, who likes me, I think, and who will not want to be involved in your scandal. A respectable firm like Marshall and Company. The deal would be off in an hour. (*Turns to them angrily*) And you know it. Now I don't want to hear any more from any of you. You'll do no more bargaining in this house. I'll take my seventy-five per cent and we'll forget the story forever. That's one way of doing it, and the way I prefer. You know me well enough to know that I don't mind taking the other way.

BEN (*after a second, slowly*) None of us have ever known you well enough, Regina.

REGINA You're getting old, Ben. Your tricks aren't as smart as they used to be. (*There is no answer. She waits, then smiles*) All right. I take it that's settled and I get what I asked for.

OSCAR (*furiously to BEN*) Are you going to let her do this—

BEN (*turns to look at him, slowly*) You have a suggestion?

REGINA (*puts her arms above her head, stretches, laughs*) No, he hasn't. All right. Now, Leo, I have forgotten that you ever saw the bonds. (*Archly, to BEN and OSCAR*) And as long as you boys both behave your-

selves, I've forgotten that we ever talked about them. You can draw up the necessary papers tomorrow. (*BEN laughs. LEO stares at him, starts for door. Exits. OSCAR moves towards door angrily. REGINA looks at BEN, nods, laughs with him. For a second, OSCAR stands in the door, looking back at them. Then he exits.*)

REGINA You're a good loser, Ben. I like that.

BEN (*he picks up his coat, then turns to her*) Well, I say to myself, what's the good? You and I aren't like Oscar. We're not sour people. I think that comes from a good digestion. Then, too, one loses today and wins tomorrow. I say to myself, years of planning and I get what I want. Then I don't get it. But I'm not discouraged. The century's turning, the world is open. Open for people like you and me. Ready for us, waiting for us. After all this is just the beginning. There are hundreds of Hubbards sitting in rooms like this throughout the country. All their names aren't Hubbard, but they are all Hubbards and they will own this country some day. We'll get along.

REGINA (*smiles*) I think so.

BEN Then, too, I say to myself, things may change. (*Looks at ALEXANDRA*) I agree with Alexandra. What is a man in a wheel chair doing on a staircase? I ask myself that.

REGINA (*looks up at him*) And what do you answer?

BEN I have no answer. But maybe some day I will. Maybe never, but maybe some day. (*Smiles. Pats her arm.*) When I do, I'll let you know. (*Goes towards hall.*)

REGINA When you do, write me I will be in Chicago (*Gaily*) Ah, Ben, if Papa had only left me his money!

BEN I'll see you tomorrow

REGINA Oh, yes Certainly You'll be sort of working for me now

BEN (*as he passes ALEXANDRA, smiles*) Alexandra, you're turning out to be a right interesting girl (*Looks at REGINA*) Well, good night all (*He exits*)

REGINA (*sits quietly for a second, stretches, turns to look at ALEXANDRA*) What do you want to talk to me about, Alexandra?

ALEXANDRA (*slowly*) I've changed my mind I don't want to talk There's nothing to talk about now

REGINA You're acting very strange Not like yourself You've had a bad shock today I know that And you loved Papa, but you must have expected this to come some day You knew how sick he was

ALEXANDRA I knew We all knew

REGINA It will be good for you to get away from here Good for me, too Time heals most wounds, Alexandra You're young, you shall have all the things I wanted I'll make the world for you the way I wanted it to be for me (*Uncomfortably*) Don't sit there staring You've been around Birdie so much you're getting just like her

ALEXANDRA (*nods*) Funny That's what Aunt Birdie said today

REGINA (*nods*) Be good for you to get away from all this (*ADDIE enters*)

ADDIE Cal is back, Miss Regina He says Dr Sloan will be coming in a few minutes

REGINA We'll go in a few weeks A few weeks! That means two or three Saturdays, two or three Sundays (*Sighs*) Well, I'm very tired I shall go to bed I don't want any supper Put the lights out and lock up (*ADDIE moves to the piano lamp, turns it out*) You go to your room, Alexandra Addie will bring you something hot You look very tired (*Rises To ADDIE*) Call me when Dr Sloan gets here I don't want to see anybody else I don't want any condolence calls tonight The whole town will be over

ALEXANDRA Mama, I'm not coming with you I'm not going to Chicago

REGINA (*turns to her*) You're very upset, Alexandra

ALEXANDRA (*quietly*) I mean what I say With all my heart

REGINA We'll talk about it tomorrow The morning will make a difference

ALEXANDRA It won't make any difference And there isn't anything to talk about I am going away from you Because I want to Because I know Papa would want me to

REGINA (*puzzled, careful, polite*). You *know* your papa wanted you to go away from me?

ALEXANDRA Yes

REGINA (*softly*) And if I say no?

ALEXANDRA (*looks at her*) Say it, Mama, say it And see what happens.

REGINA (*softly, after a pause*) And if I make you stay?

ALEXANDRA That would be foolish. It wouldn't work in the end.

REGINA You're very serious about it, aren't you? (*Crosses to stairs*) Well, you'll change your mind in a few days.

ALEXANDRA You only change your mind when you want to. And I won't want to.

REGINA (*going up the steps*) Alexandra, I've come to the end of my rope. Somewhere there has to be what I want, too. Life goes too fast. Do what you want, think what you want, go where you want. I'd like to keep you with me, but I won't make you stay. Too many people used to make me do too many things. No, I won't make you stay.

ALEXANDRA You couldn't, Mama, because I want to leave here. As I've never wanted anything in my life before. Because now I understand what

Papa was trying to tell me. (*Pause*) All in one day Addie said there were people who ate the earth and other people who stood around and watched them do it. And just now Uncle Ben said the same thing. Really, he said the same thing. (*Tensely*) Well, tell him for me, Mama, I'm not going to stand around and watch you do it. Tell him I'll be fighting as hard as he'll be fighting. (*Rises*) some place where people don't just stand around and watch.

REGINA Well, you have spirit, after all. I used to think you were all sugar water. We don't have to be bad friends. I don't want us to be bad friends, Alexandra. (*Starts, stops, turns to ALEXANDRA*) Would you like to come and talk to me, Alexandra? Would you—would you like to sleep in my room tonight?

ALEXANDRA (*takes a step towards her*) Are you afraid, Mama? (*REGINA does not answer. She moves slowly out of sight. ADDIE comes to ALEXANDRA, presses her arm.*)

CURTAIN

The Man Who Came to Dinner

BY MOSS HART AND
GEORGE S. KAUFMAN

TO
ALEXANDER WCOLLCOTT
FOR REASONS
THAT ARE NOBODY'S BUSINESS

The Authors

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The Man Who Came to Dinner was first produced at the Music Box Theatre, New York City, by Sam H. Harris, on October 16, 1939. Following is the original cast.

| | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| MRS. ERNEST W. STANLEY | Virginia Hammond |
| MISS PREEN | Mary Wickes |
| RICHARD STANLEY | Gordon Merrick |
| JUNE STANLEY | Barbara Wooddell |
| JOHN | George Probert |
| SARAH | Mrs. Priestley Morrison |
| MRS. DEXTER | Barbara Adams |
| MRS. MCCUTCHEON | Edmonia Nolley |
| MR. STANLEY | George Lessey |
| MAGGIE CUTLER | Edith Atwater |
| DR. BRADLEY | Dudley Clements |
| SHERIDAN WHITESIDE | Monty Woolley |
| HARRIET STANLEY | Ruth Vivian |
| BERT JEFFERSON | Theodore Newton |
| PROFESSOR MEIZ | LeRoi Operti |
| THE LUNCHEON GUESTS | { Phil Sheridan |
| | { Charles Washington |
| | { William Postance |
| MR. BAKER | Carl Johnson |
| EXPRESSMAN | Harold Woolf |
| LORRAINE SHELTON | Carol Goodner |
| SANDY | Michael Harvey |
| BEVERLY CARLTON | John Hoysradt |
| WESTCOTT | Edward Fisher |
| RADIO TECHNICIANS | { Rodney Stewart |
| | { Carl Johnson |
| | { Daniel Leone |
| | { Jack Whitman |
| SIX YOUNG BOYS | { Daniel Landon |
| | { Donald Landon |
| | { DeWitt Purdue |
| | { Robert Rea |
| BANJO | David Burns |
| TWO DEPUTIES | { Curtis Karpe |
| | { Phil Sheridan |
| A PLAINCLOTHES MAN | William Postance |

Stage Manager—Bernard Hart

Setting by Donald Oenslager

With thanks to Cole Porter for the music and lyrics.

SCENES

The scene is the home of Mr and Mrs Stanley, in a small town in Ohio

ACT ONE

SCENE I

A December morning

SCENE II

About a week later

ACT TWO

Another week has passed
Christmas Eve

ACT THREE

Christmas morning

THE MAN WHO CAME TO DINNER

ACT ONE

SCENE I

The curtain rises on the attractive living room in the home of MR and MRS ERNEST W STANLEY, in a small town in Ohio. The STANLEYS are obviously people of means. The room is large, comfortable, tastefully furnished. Double doors lead into a library, there is a glimpse of a dining room at the rear, and we see the first half dozen steps of a handsome curved staircase. At the other side, bay windows, the entrance hall, the outer door.

MRS STANLEY is hovering nervously near the library doors, which are tightly closed. She advances a step or two, retreats, advances again and this time musters up enough courage to listen at the door. Suddenly the doors are opened and she has to leap back.

A NURSE in full uniform emerges—scurries, rather, out of the room.

An angry voice from within speeds her on her way "Great dribbling cowl!"

MRS STANLEY (eagerly) How is he? Is he coming out?

(But the NURSE has already disappeared into the dining room. Simultaneously the doorbell rings—at the same time a young lad of twenty-one, RICHARD STANLEY, is descending the stairs.)

RICHARD I'll go, Mother.

(JOHN, a white-coated servant, comes hurrying in from the dining room and starts up the stairs, two at a time.)

MRS STANLEY What's the matter? What is it?

JOHN They want pillows (And he is out of sight.)
(Meanwhile the NURSE is returning to the sickroom. The voice is heard again as she opens the doors "Don't call yourself a doctor in my presence!")

You're a quack if I ever saw one!"
RICHARD returns from the hall, carrying two huge packages and a sheaf of cablegrams.)

RICHARD Four more cablegrams and more packages. Dad is going crazy upstairs, with that bell ringing all the time.

(Meanwhile JUNE, the daughter of the house, has come down the stairs. An attractive girl of twenty. At the same time the telephone is ringing.)

MRS STANLEY Oh, dear! June, will you go? What did you say, Richard?

RICHARD (examining the packages). One's from New York and one from San Francisco.

MRS STANLEY There was something from Alaska early this morning.

JUNE (at the telephone) Yes?
Yes, that's right

MRS STANLEY Who is it?
(Before JUNE can answer, the double doors are opened again and the NURSE appears. The voice calls after her "Doesn't that bird-brain of yours ever function?")

THE NURSE I—I'll get them right away. He wants some Players Club cigarettes

MRS STANLEY Players Club?

RICHARD They have 'em at Kitchener's. I'll run down and get 'em (He is off)

JUNE (still at the phone) Hello
Yes, I'm waiting

MRS STANLEY Tell me, Miss Preen, is he—are they bringing him out soon?

MISS PREEN (wearily) We're getting him out of bed now. He'll be out very soon. Oh, thank you (This last is to JOHN, who has descended the stairs with three or four pillows)

MRS STANLEY Oh, I'm so glad. He must be very happy (And again we hear the invalid's voice as MISS PREEN passes into the room "Trapped like a rat in this hell-hole! Take your fishhooks off me!")

JUNE (at the phone) Hello
Yes, he's here, but he can't come to the phone right now. London? (She covers the transmitter with her hand) It's London calling Mr Whiteside

MRS STANLEY London? My, my!

JUNE Two o'clock? Yes, I think he could talk then. All right (She hangs up) Well, who do you think that was? Mr H G Wells

MRS STANLEY (wild-eyed) H G Wells? On our telephone? (The doorbell again)

JUNE I'll go. This is certainly a busy house (In the meantime SARAH, the cook, has come from the dining room with a pitcher of orange juice)

MRS STANLEY (as SARAH knocks on the double doors) Oh, that's fine, Sarah. Is it fresh?

SARAH Yes, ma'am (The doors are opened, SARAH hands the orange juice to the nurse. The voice roars once more "You have the touch of a sex-starved cobra!")

SARAH (beaming) His voice is just the same as on the radio (She disappears into the dining room as JUNE returns from the entrance hall, ushering in two friends of her mother's, MRS DEXTER and MRS MC CUTCHEON. One is carrying a flowering plant, partially wrapped, the other is holding, with some care, what turns out to be a jar of calf's-foot jelly)

THE LADIES Good morning!

MRS STANLEY Girls, what do you think? He's getting up and coming out today!

MRS MC CUTCHEON You don't mean it!

MRS. DEXTER Can we stay and see him?

MRS. STANLEY Why, of course—he'd love it. Girls, do you know what just happened?

JUNE (*departing*) I'll be upstairs, Mother, if you want me.

MRS. STANLEY What? Oh, yes, June, tell your father he'd better come down, will you? Mr. Whiteside is coming out.

MRS. DEXTER Is he really coming out today? I brought him a plant—Do you think it's all right if I give it to him?

MRS. STANLEY Why, I think that would be lovely.

MRS. MC CUTCHEON And some calf's-foot jelly.

MRS. STANLEY Why, how nice! Who do you think was on the phone just now? H. G. Wells, from London. And look at those cablegrams. He's had calls and messages from all over this country and Europe. The *New York Times*, and Radio City Music Hall—I don't know why they called—and Felix Frankfurter, and Dr. Dafoe, the Mount Wilson Observatory—I just can't tell you what's been going on.

MRS. DEXTER There's a big piece about it in this week's *Time*. Did you see it? (*Drawing it out of her bag*.)

MRS. STANLEY No—really?

MRS. MC CUTCHEON Your name's in it too, Daisy. It tells all about the whole thing. Listen. "Portly Sheridan Whiteside, critic, lecturer, wit,

radio orator, intimate friend of the great and near great, last week found his celebrated wit no weapon with which to combat a fractured hip. The Falstaffian Mr. Whiteside, trekking across the country on one of his annual lecture tours, met his Waterloo in the shape of a small piece of ice on the doorstep of Mr. and Mrs. Ernest W. Stanley, of Mesalia, Ohio. Result: Cancelled lectures and disappointment to thousands of adoring clubwomen in Omaha, Denver, and points west. Further result: The idol of the air waves rests until further notice in home of surprised Mr. and Mrs. Stanley. Possibility: Christmas may be postponed this year." What's that mean?

MRS. STANLEY Why, what do you think of that? (*She takes the magazine, reads*.) "A small piece of ice on the doorstep of Mr. and Mrs. Ernest"—think of it!

MRS. MC CUTCHEON Of course if it were my house, Daisy, I'd have a bronze plate put on the step, right where he fell.

MRS. STANLEY Well, of course I felt terrible about it. He just never goes to dinner anywhere, and he finally agreed to come here, and then this had to happen. Poor Mr. Whiteside! But it's going to be so wonderful having him with us, even for a little while. Just think of it! We'll sit around in the evening and discuss books and plays, all the great people he's known. And he'll talk in that wonderful way of his. He may even read "Good-bye, Mr. Chips" to us. (*MR. STANLEY, solid, substantial—the American business man—is descending the stairs*.)

STANLEY. Daisy, I can't wait any longer. If—ah, good morning, ladies.

MRS STANLEY. Ernest, he's coming out any minute, and H G Wells telephoned from London, and we're in *Time* Look!

STANLEY (*taking the magazine*) I don't like this kind of publicity at all, Daisy. When do you suppose he's going to leave?

MRS STANLEY Well, he's only getting up this morning—after all, he's had quite a shock, and he's been in bed for two full weeks. He'll certainly have to rest a few days, Ernest.

STANLEY Well, I'm sure it's a great honor, his being in the house, but it is a little upsetting—phone going all the time, bells ringing, messenger boys running in and out—
(*Out of the sickroom comes a business-like-looking young woman about thirty. Her name is MARGARET CUTLER—MAGGIE to her friends.*)

MAGGIE Pardon me, Mrs Stanley—have the cigarettes come yet?

MRS STANLEY They're on the way, Miss Cutler. My son went for them.

MAGGIE Thank you.

MRS STANLEY Ah—this is Miss Cutler, Mr Whiteside's secretary.
(*An exchange of "How do you do's?"*)

MAGGIE May I move this chair?

MRS STANLEY (*all eagerness*) You mean he's—coming out now?

MAGGIE (*quietly*) He is indeed.

MRS STANLEY Ernest, call June June! June! Mr Whiteside is coming out!

(*JOHN, visible in the dining room, summons SARAH to attend the excitement "Sarah! Sarah!" SARAH and JOHN appear in the dining-room entrance, JUNE on the stairs. MRS STANLEY and the two other ladies are keenly expectant, even MR STANLEY is on the qui vive. The double doors are opened once more, and DR BRADLEY appears, bag in hand. He has taken a good deal of punishment, and speaks with a rather false heartiness.*)

DR BRADLEY Well, here we are, merry and bright. Good morning, good morning. Bring our little patient out, Miss Preen.
(*A moment's pause, and then a wheelchair is rolled through the door. It is full of pillows, blankets, and SHERIDAN WHITESIDE. SHERIDAN WHITESIDE is indeed portly and Falstaffian. He is wearing an elaborate velvet smoking jacket and a very loud tie, and he looks like every caricature ever drawn of him. There is a hush as the wheelchair rolls into the room. Welcoming smiles break over every face. The chair comes to a halt, MR WHITESIDE looks slowly around, into each and every beaming face. His fingers drum for a moment on the arm of the chair. He looks slowly around once more. And then he speaks.*)

WHITESIDE (*quietly, to MAGGIE*) I may vomit.

MRS STANLEY (*with a nervous little laugh*) Good morning, Mr Whiteside. I'm Mrs Ernest Stanley—remember? And this is Mr Stanley.

STANLEY How do you do, Mr Whiteside? I hope that you are better.

WHITESIDE Thank you. I am suing you for a hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

STANLEY How's that? What?

WHITESIDE I said I am suing you for a hundred and fifty thousand dollars

MRS STANLEY You mean—because you fell on our steps, Mr Whiteside?

WHITESIDE Samuel J Liebowitz will explain it to you in court Who are those two harpies standing there like the kiss of death?
(MRS MC CUTCHEON, with a little gasp, drops the calf's-foot jelly. It smashes on the floor.)

MRS MC CUTCHEON Oh, dear! My calf's-foot jelly

WHITESIDE Made from your own foot, I have no doubt And now, Mrs Stanley, I have a few small matters to take up with you Since this corner druggist at my elbow tells me that I shall be confined in this mouldy mortuary for at least another ten days, due entirely to your stupidity and negligence, I shall have to carry on my activities as best I can I shall require the exclusive use of this room, as well as that drafty sewer which you call the library I want no one to come in or out while I am in this room

STANLEY What do you mean, sir?

MRS STANLEY (stunned) But we have to go up the stairs to get to our rooms, Mr Whiteside

WHITESIDE Isn't there a back entrance?

MRS STANLEY Why—yes

WHITESIDE Then use that I shall also require a room for my secretary,

Miss Cutler I shall have a great many incoming and outgoing calls, so please use the telephone as little as possible I sleep until noon and require quiet through the house until that hour There will be five for lunch today Where is the cook?

STANLEY Mr Whiteside, if I may interrupt for a moment—

WHITESIDE You may not, sir Will you take your clammy hand off my chair? (*This last to the nurse*)

And now will you all leave quietly, or must I ask Miss Cutler to pass among you with a baseball bat?
(MRS DEXTER and MRS MC CUTCHEON are beating a hasty retreat, their gifts still in hand.)

MRS MC CUTCHEON Well—good-bye, Daisy We'll call you— Oh, no, we mustn't use the phone Well—we'll see you (*And they are gone.*)

STANLEY (*boldly*) Now look here, Mr Whiteside—

WHITESIDE There is nothing to discuss, sir Considering the damage I have suffered at your hands, I am asking very little Good day

STANLEY (*controlling himself*) I'll call you from the office later, Daisy.

WHITESIDE Not on this phone, please
(STANLEY gives him a look, but goes.)

WHITESIDE Here is the menu for lunch (*He extends a slip of paper to*
MRS STANLEY)

MRS STANLEY But—I've already ordered lunch

WHITESIDE It will be sent up to you on a tray I am using the dining room for my guests Where are those cigarettes?

MRS STANLEY Why—my son went for them I don't know why he—here, Sarah (*She hands SARAH the luncheon slip*) I'll—have mine upstairs on a tray (*SARAH and JOHN depart*)

WHITESIDE (*to JUNE, who has been posed on the landing during all this*) Young lady, will you either go up those stairs or come down them? I cannot stand indecision (*JUNE is about to speak, decides against it, and ascends the stairs with a good deal of spirit* MRS STANLEY is hovering uncertainly on the steps as RICHARD returns with the cigarettes)

RICHARD Oh, good morning I'm sorry I was so long—I had to go to three different stores

WHITESIDE How did you travel? By ox-cart?

(*RICHARD is considerably taken aback His eyes go to his mother, who motions to him to come up the stairs They disappear together, their eyes unsteadily on WHITESIDE*)

WHITESIDE Is there a man in the world who suffers as I do from the gross inadequacies of the human race? (*Enter the NURSE, who is fussing around the chair again*) Take those canal boats away from me! (*She obeys, hastily*) Go in and read the life of Florence Nightingale and learn how unfitted you are for your chosen profession (*MISS FREEN glares at him, but goes*)

DR BRADLEY (*heartily*). Well, I think I can safely leave you in Miss

Cutler's capable hands Shall I look in again this afternoon?

WHITESIDE If you do, I shall spit right in your eye

DR BRADLEY What a sense of humor you writers have! By the way, it isn't really worth mentioning, but—I've been doing a little writing myself. About my medical experiences

WHITESIDE (*quietly*) Am I to be spared nothing?

DR BRADLEY Would it be too much to ask you to—glance over it while you're here?

WHITESIDE (*eyes half closed, as though the pain were too exquisite to bear*) Trapped

DR BRADLEY (*delving into his bag*). I just happen to have a copy with me (*He brings out a tremendous manuscript*) "Forty Years an Ohio Doctor The Story of a Humble Practitioner"

WHITESIDE I shall drop everything.

DR BRADLEY Much obliged, and I hope you like it Well, see you on the morrow Keep that hip quiet and don't forget those little pills (*He goes*)

WHITESIDE (*handing the manuscript to MAGGIE*) Maggie, will you take *Forty Years Below the Navel* or whatever it's called?

MAGGIE (*surveying him*) I must say you have certainly behaved with all of your accustomed grace and charm.

WHITESIDE Look here, Puss—I am in no mood to discuss my behavior good or bad.

MAGGIE. These people have done everything in their power to make you comfortable. And they happen, God knows why, to look upon you with a certain wonder and admiration.

WHITESIDE. If they had looked a little more carefully at their doorstep I would not be troubling them now. I did not wish to cross their cheerless threshold. I was hounded and badgered into it. I now find myself, after two weeks of racking pain, accused of behaving without charm. What would you have me do? Kiss them?

MAGGIE (*giving up*). Very well, Sherry. After ten years I should have known better than to try to do anything about your manners. But when I finally give up this job I may write a book about it all. *Cavalcade of Insult, or Through the Years with Prince Charming*.

WHITESIDE. Listen, Repulsive, you are tied to me with an umbilical cord made of piano wire. And now if we may dismiss the subject of my charm, for which, incidentally, I receive fifteen hundred dollars per appearance, possibly we can go to work. Oh, no, we can't. Yes?

(*This last is addressed to a wrathlike lady of uncertain years, who has more or less floated into the room. She is carrying a large spray of holly, and her whole manner suggests something not quite of this world.*)

THE LADY (*her voice seems to float, too*). My name is Harnet Stanley. I know you are Shendan Whiteside. I saw this holly, framed green against the pine trees. I remembered what you had written, about Tess and *Jude the Obscure*. It was the nicest present I could bring you. (*She*

places the holly in his lap, and drifts out of the room again.)

WHITESIDE (*his eyes following her*). For God's sake, what was that?

MAGGIE. That was Mr Stanley's sister, Harnet. I've talked to her a few times—she's quite strange.

WHITESIDE. Strange? She's right out of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.

You know, I've seen that face before somewhere.

MAGGIE. Nonsense. You couldn't have.

WHITESIDE (*dismissing it*). Oh, well! Let's get down to work. (*He hands her the armful of holly*). Here! Press this in the doctor's book. (*He picks up the first of a pile of papers*). If young men keep asking me how to become dramatic critics—(*He tears up the letter and drops the pieces on the floor*).

MAGGIE (*who has picked up the little sheaf of messages from the table*). Here are some telegrams.

WHITESIDE (*a letter in his hand*). What date is this?

MAGGIE. December tenth.

WHITESIDE. Send a wire to Columbia Broadcasting. "You can schedule my Christmas Eve broadcast from the New York studio, as I shall return East instead of proceeding to Hollywood. Stop. For special New Year's Eve broadcast will have as my guests Jascha Heifetz, Katharine Cornell, Schiaparelli, the Lunts, and Dr. Alexis Carrel, with Anthony Eden on short wave from England. Whiteside."

MAGGIE Are you sure you'll be all right by Christmas, Sherry?

WHITESIDE Of course I will Send a cable to Sacha Guitry "Will be in Paris June ninth Dinner seven-thirty Whiteside" Wire to *Harper's Magazine* "Do not worry, Stinky Copy will arrive Whiteside" Send a cable to the Maharajah of Jehraput, Bombay "Dear Boo-Boo Schedule changed Can you meet me Calcutta July twelfth? Dinner eight-thirty Whiteside" Arturo Toscanini Where is he?

MAGGIE I'll find him

WHITESIDE "Counting on you January 4th Metropolitan Opera House my annual benefit Home for Paroled Convicts As you know this is a very worthy cause and close to my heart Tibbett, Rethberg, Martinelli and Flagstad have promised me personally to appear Will you have quiet supper with me and Ethel Barrymore afterwards? Whiteside" (*The telephone rings*) If that's for Mrs Stanley tell them she's too drunk to talk

MAGGIE Hello Hollywood?

WHITESIDE If it's Goldwyn, hang up

MAGGIE Hello Banjo! (*Her face lights up*)

WHITESIDE Banjo! Give me that phone!

MAGGIE Banjo, you old so-and-so! How are you, darling?

WHITESIDE Come on—give me that!

MAGGIE Shut up, Sherry! Are you coming East, Banjo? I miss you
Now, we're not going to Hollywood Oh, he's going to live

WHITESIDE Stop dreling and give me the phone

MAGGIE In fact, he's screaming at me now Here he is

WHITESIDE (*taking the phone*) How are you, you fawn's behind? And what are you giving me for Christmas? (*He roars with laughter at Banjo's answer*) What news, Banjo, my boy? How's the picture coming? How are Wacko and Sloppo? No, no, I'm all right.

Yes, I'm in very good hands Dr Crippen is taking care of me What about you? Having any fun? Playing any cribbage? What? (*Again he laughs loudly*) Well, don't take all his money—leave a little bit for me You're what? Having your portrait painted? By whom? Milt Gross? No, I'm going back to New York from here I'll be there for twelve days, and then I go to Dartmouth for the Drama Festival You wouldn't understand Well, I can't waste my time talking to Hollywood riffraff Kiss Louella Parsons for me Good-bye (*He hangs up and turns to MAGGIE*) He took fourteen hundred dollars from Sam Goldwyn at cribbage last night, and Sam said, "Banjo, I will never play garbage with you again"

MAGGIE What's all this about his having his portrait painted?

WHITESIDE. Mm. Salvador Dalí That's all that face of his needs—a surrealist to paint it Now what do you want, Miss Bed Pan? (*This is addressed to the nurse, who has returned somewhat apprehensively to the room*)

MISS PREEN It's—it's your pills One every—forty-five minutes (*She drops*

them into his lap and hurries out of the room)

WHITESIDE Now where were we?

MAGGIE (*the messages in her hand*) Here's a cable from that dear friend of yours, Lorraine Sheldon

WHITESIDE Let me see it

MAGGIE (*reading the message in a tone that gives MISS SHELDON none the better of it*) "Sherry, my poor sweet lamb, have been in Scotland on a shooting party with Lord and Lady Cunard and only just heard of your poor hip" (*MAGGIE gives a faint raspberry, then reads on*) "Am down here in Surrey with Lord Bottomley Sailing Wednesday on the *Normandie* and cannot wait to see my poor sweet Sherry Your blossom girl, Lorraine"

In the words of the master, I may vomit

WHITESIDE Don't be bitter, Puss, just because Lorraine is more beautiful than you are

MAGGIE Lorraine Sheldon is a very fair example of that small but vicious circle you move in

WHITESIDE Pure sex jealousy if ever I saw it Give me the rest of those

MAGGIE (*mumbling to herself*) Lorraine Sheldon Lord Bottomley My Aunt Fanny

WHITESIDE (*who has opened the next message*) Ah! It's from Destiny's Tot

MAGGIE (*peering over his shoulder*) England's little Rover Boy?

WHITESIDE Um-hm (*He reads*) "Treacle Face, what is this I hear about a hip fractured in some bordello brawl? Does this mean our Holly wood Christmas party is off? Finished the new play in Pago-Pago and it's superb Myself and a ukulele leave Honolulu tomorrow, in that order By the way, the Sultan of Zanzibar wants to meet Ginger Rogers Let's face it Oscar Wilde"

MAGGIE He does travel, doesn't he? You know, it'd be nice if the world went around Beverly Carlton for a change

WHITESIDE Hollywood next week—why couldn't he stop over on his way to New York? Send him a cable "Beverly Carlton, Royal Hawaiian Hotel, Honolulu—" (*The door bell rings MR WHITESIDE is properly annoyed*) If these people intend to have their friends using the front door—

MAGGIE What do you want them to use—a rope ladder?

WHITESIDE I will not have a lot of mildewed pus-bags rushing in and out of this house— (*He stops as the voice of JOHN is heard at the front door*) "Oh, good morning, Mr Jefferson" The answering voice of MR. JEFFERSON is not quite audible)

WHITESIDE (*roaring*) There's nobody home! The Stanleys have been arrested for counterfeiting! Go away! (*But the visitor, meanwhile, has already appeared in the archway MR JEFFERSON is an interesting-looking young man in his early thirties*)

JEFFERSON Good morning, Mr Whiteside I'm Jefferson, of the *Mesalia Journal*

WHITESIDE (*sotto voce, to MAGGIE*)
Get rid of him

MAGGIE (*brusquely*) I'm sorry—Mr
Whiteside is seeing no one

JEFFERSON Really?

MAGGIE So will you please excuse
us? Good day

JEFFERSON (*not giving up*) Mr
Whiteside seems to be sitting up and
taking notice

MAGGIE I'm afraid he isn't taking
notice of the *Mesalia Journal* Do
you mind?

JEFFERSON You know, if I'm going
to be insulted I'd like it to be by
Mr Whiteside himself I never did
like road companies

WHITESIDE (*looking around, inter-
ested*) Mm Touché if I ever heard
one And in *Mesalia* too, Maggie
dear

MAGGIE (*still on the job*) Will you
please leave?

JEFFERSON (*ignoring her*) How
about an interview, Mr Whiteside?

WHITESIDE I never give them Go
away

JEFFERSON Mr Whiteside, if I don't
get this interview, I lose my job

WHITESIDE That would be quite all
right with me

JEFFERSON Now you don't mean
that, Mr Whiteside You used to be
a newspaperman yourself You know
what editors are like Well, mine's
the toughest one that ever lived

WHITESIDE You won't get around me
that way If you don't like him, get
off the paper

JEFFERSON Yes, but I happen to
think it's a good paper William Al-
len White could have got out of
Empona, but he didn't

WHITESIDE You have the effrontery,
in my presence, to compare yourself
with William Allen White?

JEFFERSON Only in the sense that
William Allen White stayed in Em-
pona, and I want to stay here and
say what I want to say

WHITESIDE Such as what?

JEFFERSON Well, I can't put it into
words, Mr Whiteside—it'd sound
like an awful lot of hooley But the
Journal was my father's paper It's
kind of a sentimental point with me,
the paper I'd like to carry on where
he left off

WHITESIDE Ah—just a minute Then
this terrifying editor, this dread jour-
nalistic Apocalypse is—you?

JEFFERSON Ah—yes, in a word
(WHITESIDE *chuckles with apprecia-
tion*)

MAGGIE (*annoyed*) In the future,
Sherry, I wish you would let me
know when you don't want to talk
to people I'll usher them right in
(*She goes into the library.*)

WHITESIDE Young man, that kind
of journalistic trick went out with
Richard Harding Davis Come
over here I suppose you've written
that novel?

JEFFERSON No, I've written ~~that~~
play

WHITESIDE Well, I don't want to read it. But you can send me your paper—I'll take a year's subscription. Do you write the editorials, too?

JEFFERSON Every one of them

WHITESIDE I know just what they're like. Ah, me! I'm afraid you're that noble young newspaperman—crusading, idealistic, dull (*He looks him up and down*). Very good casting, too.

JEFFERSON You're not bad casting yourself, Mr. Whiteside.

WHITESIDE We won't discuss it. Do these old eyes see a box of goodies over there? Hand them to me on your way out.

JEFFERSON (*as he passes over the candy*) The trouble is, Mr. Whiteside, that your being in this town comes under the heading of news. Practically the biggest news since the Armistice.

WHITESIDE (*examining the candy*) Mm. Pecan butternut fudge. (*MISS PREEN, on her way to the kitchen from the library, stops short as she sees MR. WHITESIDE with a piece of candy in his hand*.)

MISS PREEN Oh, my! You mustn't eat candy, Mr. Whiteside. It's very bad for you.

WHITESIDE (*turning*) My great-aunt Jennifer ate a whole box of candy every day of her life. She lived to be a hundred and two, and when she had been dead three days she looked better than you do now. (*He swings blandly back to his visitor*). What were you saying, old fellow?

JEFFERSON (*as MISS PREEN makes a hasty exit*) I can at least report to my readers that chivalry is not yet dead.

WHITESIDE We won't discuss it. Well, now that you have won me with your pretty ways, what do you want?

JEFFERSON Well, how about a brief talk on famous murders? You're an authority on murder as a fine art.

WHITESIDE My dear boy, when I talk about murder I get paid for it. I have made more money out of the Snyder-Gray case than the lawyers did. So don't expect to get it for nothing.

JEFFERSON Well, then, what do you think of Mesalia, how long are you going to be here, where are you going, things like that?

WHITESIDE Very well. (a) Mesalia is a town of irresistible charm, (b) I cannot wait to get out of it, and (c) I am going from here to Crockfield, for my semi-annual visit to the Crockfield Home for Paroled Convicts, for which I have raised over half a million dollars in the last five years. From there I go to New York.

Have you ever been to Crockfield, Jefferson?

JEFFERSON No, I haven't. I always meant to.

WHITESIDE As a newspaperman you ought to go, instead of wasting your time with me. It's only about seventy-five miles from here. Did you ever hear how Crockfield started?

JEFFERSON. No, I didn't.

WHITESIDE Ah! Sit down, Jefferson. It is one of the most endearing and touching stories of our generation. One misty St. Valentine's Eve—the year was 1901—a little lady who had given her name to an era, Victoria, lay dying in Windsor Castle. Maude Adams had not yet caused every young heart to swell as she tripped across the stage as Peter Pan, Irving Berlin had not yet written the first note of a ragtime rigadloon that was to set the nation's feet a-tapping, and Elias P. Crockfield was just emerging from the State penitentiary. Destitute, embittered, cruel of heart, he wandered, on this St. Valentine's Eve, into a little church. But there was no godliness in his heart that night, no prayer upon his lips. In the faltering twilight, Elias P. Crockfield made his way toward the poor box. With callous fingers he ripped open this poignant testimony of a simple people's faith. Greedily he clutched at the few pitiful coins within. And then a child's wavering treble broke the twilight stillness. "Please, Mr. Man," said a little girl's voice, "won't you be my Valentine?" Elias P. Crockfield turned. There stood before him a bewitching little creature of five, her yellow curls cascading over her shoulders like a golden Niagara, in her tiny outstretched hand a humble valentine. In that one crystal moment a sealed door opened in the heart of Elias P. Crockfield, and in his mind was born an idea. Twenty-five years later three thousand ruddy-cheeked convicts were gamboling on the broad lawns of Crockfield Home, frolicking in the cool depths of its swimming pool, broadcasting with their own symphony orchestra from their own radio station. Elias P. Crockfield has long since gone to his Maker, but the little girl of the golden curls, now grown

to lovely womanhood, is known as the Angel of Crockfield, for she is the wife of the warden, and in the main hall of Crockfield, between a Rembrandt and an El Greco, there hangs, in a simple little frame, a humble valentine.

MAGGIE (*who has emerged from the library in time to hear the finish of this*) And in the men's washroom, every Christmas Eve, the ghost of Elias P. Crockfield appears in one of the booths. Will you sign these, please?
(*The doorbell is heard*)

WHITESIDE This aging ingénue, Mr. Jefferson, I retain in my employ only because she is the sole support of her two-headed brother.

JEFFERSON I understand. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Whiteside—you've been very kind. By the way, I'm a cribbage player, if you need one while you're here.

WHITESIDE Fine. How much can you afford to lose?

JEFFERSON I usually win.

WHITESIDE We won't discuss that. Come back at eight-thirty. We'll play three-handed with Elsie Dinsmore Metz!

(*JOHN, who has answered the door bell, has ushered in a strange-looking little man in his fifties. His hair runs all over his head and his clothes are too big for him*)

WHITESIDE Metz, you incredible beetle-hound! What are you doing here?

METZ (*with a mild Teutonic accent*) I explain, Sherry. First I kiss my little Maggie.

MAGGIE (*embracing him*) Metz darling, what a wonderful surprise!

WHITESIDE The enchanted Metz! Why aren't you at the university?

Jefferson, you are standing in the presence of one of the great men of our time. When you write that inevitable autobiography, be sure to record the day that you met Professor Adolph Metz, the world's greatest authority on insect life. Metz, stop looking at me adoringly and tell me why you're here.

METZ You are sick, Sherry, so I come to cheer you.

MAGGIE Metz, you tore yourself away from your little insects and came here? Sherry, you don't deserve it.

WHITESIDE How are all your little darlings, Metz? Jefferson, would you believe that eight volumes could be written on the mating instinct of the female white ant? He did it.

METZ Seven on the female, Sherry. One on the male.

WHITESIDE Lived for two years in a cave with nothing but plant lice. He rates three pages in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Don't you, my little hookworm?

METZ Please, Sherry, you embarrass me. Look—I have brought you a present to while away the hours. (*He motions to JOHN, who comes forward bearing a great box, wrapped in brown paper. He unwraps it as he speaks.*)

METZ I said to my students "Boys and girls, I want to give a present to my sick friend, Shendan Whiteside."

So you know what we did? We made for you a community of *Periplaneta Americana*, commonly known as the American cockroach. Behold, Sherry! (*He strips off the paper.*) Roach City! Inside here are ten thousand cockroaches.

JOHN Ten thousand— (*Heading for the kitchen in great excitement.*) Sarah! Sarah!

METZ Here in Roach City they play, they make love, they mate, they die. See—here is the graveyard. They even bury their own dead.

MAGGIE I'm glad of that, or I'd have to do it.

WHITESIDE (*glaring at her*) Ssh!

METZ You can watch them, Sherry, while they live out their whole lives. It is fascinating. Look! Here is where they store their grain, here is the commissary of the aristocracy, here is the maternity hospital.

WHITESIDE Magnificent! This is my next piece for the *London Mercury*.

METZ With these earphones, Sherry, you listen to the mating calls. There are microphones down inside. Listen! (*He puts the earphones over WHITESIDE's head.*)

WHITESIDE (*listening, rapt*) Mm. How long has this been going on? (*MRS STANLEY starts timorously to descend the stairs. She tiptoes as far as the landing, then pauses as she sees the group below. Meanwhile PROF METZ, his mind ever on his work, has moved in the direction of the dining room.*)

METZ (*suddenly his face lights up*)
Aha! *Pteriplaneta Americana!* There
are cockroaches in this house!

MRS STANLEY (*shocked into speech*)
I beg your pardon! (*The doorbell
rings*) Mr Whiteside, I don't know
who this man is, but I will not stand
here and—

WHITESIDE Then go upstairs These
are probably my luncheon guests
Metz, you're staying for the day, of
course? Jefferson, stay for lunch?
Maggie, tell 'em there'll be two more
Ah, come right in, Baker Good morn-
ing, gentlemen (*The gentlemen ad-
dressed are three in number—two
white, one black They are convicts,
and they look the part Prison gray,
handcuffed together BAKER, in uni-
form, is a prison guard He carries a
rifle*) Jefferson, here are the fruits of
that humble valentine These men,
now serving the final months of their
prison terms, have chosen to enter
the ivy-covered walls of Crockfield
They have come here today to learn
from me a little of its tradition .

Gentlemen, I envy you your great
adventure

JOHN (*in the dining-room doorway*)
Lunch is ready, Mr Whiteside

WHITESIDE Good! Let's go right in
(*To one of the convicts, as they pass*)
You're Michaelson, aren't you?
Butcher-shop murders?

MICHAELSON Yes, sir

WHITESIDE Thought I recognized
you After you, Baker
The other fellow, Jefferson— (*He
lowers his tone*) is Henderson,
the hatchet fiend Always did it in
a bathtub—remember? (*His voice
rises as he wheels himself into the
dining room*) We're having chicken
livers Tetrizzini, and Chernes Jubi-
lee for dessert I hope every little
tummy is a-flutter with gastric juices
Serve the white wine with the fish,
John, and close the doors I don't
want a lot of people prying on their
betters
(*The doors close Only MRS STAN-
LEY is left outside She collapses
quietly into a chair*)

CURTAIN

ACT ONE

SCENE II

Late afternoon, a week later Only a single lamp is lit

The room, in the week that has passed, has taken on something of the char-
acter of its occupant Books and papers everywhere Stacks of books on the
tables, some of them just half out of their cardboard boxes Half a dozen or
so volumes, which apparently have not *re*aled to the Master, have been
thrown onto the floor. A litter of crumpled papers around the **WHITESIDE**

wheelchair; an empty candy box has slid off his lap. An old pair of pants has been tossed over one chair, a seedy bathrobe over another. A handsome Chinese vase has been moved out of its accustomed spot and is doing duty as an ash receiver.

MR. WHITESIDE is in his wheelchair, asleep. Roach City is on a stand beside him, the earphones over his head. He has apparently dozed off while listening to the mating calls of *Periplaneta Americana*.

For a moment only his rhythmic breathing is heard. Then MISS PREEN enters from the library. She brings some medicine—a glass filled with a murky mixture. She pauses when she sees that he is asleep, then, after a good deal of hesitation, gently touches him on the shoulder. He stirs a little, she musters up her courage and touches him again.

WHITESIDE (slowly opening his eyes) I was dreaming of Lillian Russell, and I awake to find you

MISS PREEN Your—your medicine, Mr. Whiteside

WHITESIDE (taking the glass) What time is it?

MISS PREEN About half-past six

WHITESIDE Where is Miss Cutler?

MISS PREEN She went out

WHITESIDE Out?

MISS PREEN With Mr. Jefferson (She goes into the library. JOHN, meanwhile, has entered from the dining room.)

JOHN All right if I turn the lights up, Mr. Whiteside?

WHITESIDE Yes. Go right ahead, John.

JOHN And Sarah has something for you, Mr. Whiteside. Made it special.

WHITESIDE She has? Where is she? My Soufflé Queen!

SARAH (proudly entering with a tray on which reposes her latest delicacy). Here I am, Mr. Whiteside.

WHITESIDE She walks in beauty like the night, and in those deft hands there is the art of Michelangelo. Let me taste the new creation. (With one hand he pours the medicine into the Chinese vase, then swallows at a gulp one of SARAH's not so little cakes. An ecstatic expression comes over his face.) Poetry! Sheer poetry!

SARAH (beaming) I put a touch of absinthe in the dough. Do you like it?

WHITESIDE (rapturously) Ambrosial!

SARAH And I got you your terrapin Maryland for dinner.

WHITESIDE I have known but three great cooks in my time. The Khedive of Egypt had one, my great-aunt Jennifer another, and the third, Sarah, is you.

SARAH Oh, Mr. Whiteside!

WHITESIDE (lowering his voice). How would you like to come to New York and work for me? You and John.

SARAH Why, Mr Whiteside!

JOHN Sarah! It would be wonderful, Mr Whiteside, but what would we say to Mr and Mrs Stanley?

WHITESIDE Just "good-bye"

SARAH But—but they'd be awfully mad, wouldn't they? They've been very kind to us

WHITESIDE (*lightly*) Well, if they ever come to New York we can have them for dinner, if I'm not in town. Now run along and think it over. This is our little secret—just between us. And put plenty of sherry in that terrapin. Miss Preen! (SARAH and JOHN *withdraw in considerable excitement* WHITESIDE *raises his voice to a roar*) Miss Preen!

MISS PREEN (*appearing, breathless*) Yes? Yes?

WHITESIDE What have you got in there, anyway? A sailor?

MISS PREEN I was—just washing my hands

WHITESIDE What time did Miss Cutler go out?

MISS PREEN A couple of hours ago

WHITESIDE Mr Jefferson called for her?

MISS PREEN Yes, sir

WHITESIDE (*impatiently*) All right, all right. Go back to your sex life. (MISS PREEN *goes* WHITESIDE *tries to settle down to his book, but his mind is plainly troubled* He shifts a little, looks anxiously toward the outer

door HARRIET STANLEY *comes softly down the steps* She seems delighted to find MR WHITESIDE *alone*)

HARRIET (*opening an album that she has brought with her*) Dear Mr Whiteside, may I show you a few mementos of the past? I somehow feel that you would love them as I do

WHITESIDE I'd be delighted (*Observing her*) Miss Stanley, haven't we met somewhere before?

HARRIET Oh, no I would have remembered. It would have been one of my cherished memories—like these (*She spreads the portfolio before him*) Look! Here I am with my first sweetheart, under our lovely beechwood tree. I was eight and he was ten. I have never forgotten him. What happy times we had! What— (*She stops short as she hears footsteps on the stairway*) There's someone coming! I'll come back! (*She gathers up her album and vanishes into the dining room*)

(WHITESIDE *looks after her, puzzled* It is MR STANLEY who comes down the stairs. He is carrying a slip of paper in his hand, and he is obviously at the boiling point. A few steps behind comes MRS STANLEY, apprehensive and nervous)

MRS STANLEY Now, Ernest, please—

STANLEY Be quiet, Daisy. Mr Whiteside, I want to talk to you. I don't care whether you're busy or not. I have stood all that I'm going to stand

WHITESIDE Indeed?

STANLEY This is the last straw. I have just received a bill from the telephone company for seven hundred

and eighty-four dollars (*He reads from the slip in his hand*) Oklahoma City, Calcutta, Hollywood, Paris, Brussels, Rome, New York, New York, New York, New York, New York, New York— (*His voice trails off in an endless succession of New Yorks*) Now I realize, Mr Whiteside, that you are a distinguished man of letters—

MRS STANLEY Yes, of course We both do

STANLEY Please But in the past week we have not been able to call our souls our own We have not had a meal in the dining room *once* I have to tiptoe out of the house in the mornings

MRS STANLEY Now, Ernest—

STANLEY (*waving her away*) I come home to find convicts sitting at my dinner table—*butcher-shop murderers* A man putting cockroaches in the kitchen

MRS STANLEY They just escaped, Ernest

STANLEY That's not the point I don't like coming home to find twenty-two Chinese students using my bathroom I tell you I won't stand for it, no matter *who* you are

WHITESIDE Have you quite finished?

STANLEY No, I have not I go down into the cellar this morning and trip over that octopus that William Beebe sent you I tell you I won't stand it Mr Whiteside, I want you to leave this house as soon as you can and go to a hotel Stop pawing me, Daisy That's all I've got to say, Mr Whiteside

WHITESIDE And quite enough, I should say May I remind you again, Mr Stanley, that I am not a willing guest in this house? I am informed by my doctor that I must remain quiet for another ten days, at which time I shall get out of here so fast that the wind will knock you over, I hope If, however, you insist on my leaving before that, thereby causing me to suffer a relapse, I shall sue you for every additional day that I am held inactive, which will amount, I assure you, to a tidy sum

STANLEY (*to his wife*) This is outrageous Do we have to—

WHITESIDE As for the details of your petty complaints, those twenty-two Chinese students came straight from the White House, where I assure you they used the bathroom too

MRS STANLEY Mr Whiteside, my husband didn't mean—

STANLEY Yes, I did I meant every word of it

WHITESIDE There is only one point that you make in which I see some slight justice I do not expect you to pay for my telephone calls, and I shall see to it that restitution is made. Can you provide me with the exact amount?

STANLEY I certainly can, and I certainly will

WHITESIDE Good I shall instruct my lawyers to deduct it from the hundred and fifty thousand dollars that I am suing you for (*MR STANLEY starts to speak, but simply chokes with rage Furious, he storms up the steps again, MRS STANLEY following*)

WHITESIDE (*calling after him*). And I'll thank you not to trip over that octopus, which is very sensitive (*Left alone, MR WHITESIDE enjoys his triumph for a moment, then his mind jumps to more important matters. He looks at his watch, considers a second, then wheels himself over to the telephone*.)

WHITESIDE Give me the *Mesalia Journal*, please (*He peers at Roach City while waiting*). Hello, *Journal*?

Is Mr. Jefferson there?

When do you expect him? No. No message (*He hangs up, drums impatiently on the arm of his chair. Then he turns sharply at the sound of the outer door opening. But it is the younger Stanleys, RICHARD and JUNE, who enter. They are in winter togs, with ice skates under their arms. In addition, RICHARD has a camera slung over his shoulder. Their attitudes change as they see that WHITESIDE is in the room. They slide toward the stairs, obviously trying to be as unobtrusive as possible*.)

WHITESIDE Come here, you two.

Come on, come on. I'm not going to bite you. Now look here. I am by nature a gracious and charming person. If I err at all it is on the side of kindness and amiability. I have been observing you two for this past week, and you seem to me to be extremely likeable young people. I am afraid that when we first met I was definitely unpleasant to you. For that I am sorry, and I wish that in the future you would not treat me like something out of Edgar Allan Poe. How do you like my new tie?

JUNE Thank you, Mr. Whiteside. This makes things much pleasanter. And I think the tie is very pretty.

RICHARD Well, now that we're on speaking terms, Mr. Whiteside, I don't mind telling you that I have been admiring all your ties.

WHITESIDE Do you like this one?

RICHARD I certainly do.

WHITESIDE It's yours (*He takes it off and tosses it to him*). Really, this curious legend that I am a difficult person is pure fabrication. Ice-skating, eh? Ah, me! I used to cut figure eights myself, arm in arm with Betsy Ross, waving the flag behind us.

JUNE It was wonderful on the ice today. Miss Cutler and Mr. Jefferson were there.

WHITESIDE Maggie? Skating?

RICHARD Yes, and she's good, too. I got a marvelous picture of her.

WHITESIDE Were they still there when you left?

RICHARD I think so. Say, Mr. Whiteside, mind if I take a picture of you? I'd love to have one.

WHITESIDE Very well. Do you want my profile? (*He indicates his stomach*.)

JUNE (*starting up the stairs*). I'm afraid you're done for, Mr. Whiteside. My brother is a camera fiend.

RICHARD (*clicking his camera*). Thank you, Mr. Whiteside. I got a great one. (*He and JUNE go up the stairs as MAGGIE enters from the hallway. They call a "Hello, Miss Cutler!" as they disappear.*)

MAGGIE. Hello, there. . . Good evening, Sherry Really Sherry, you've got this room looking like an old parrot-cage Did you nap while I was out? (WHITESIDE merely glowers at her) What's the matter, dear? Cat run away with your tongue? (She is on her knees, gathering up debris)

WHITESIDE (furious) Don't look up at me with those great cow-eyes, you sex-ridden hag Where have you been all afternoon? Alley-cattung around with Bert Jefferson?

MAGGIE (her face aglow) Sherry—Bert read his play to me this afternoon It's superb It isn't just that play written by a newspaperman It's superb I want you to read it tonight (She puts it in his lap) It just cnes out for Cornell If you like it, will you send it to her, Sherry? And will you read it tonight?

WHITESIDE No, I will not read it tonight or any other time And while we're on the subject of Mr Jefferson, you might ask him if he wouldn't like to pay your salary, since he takes up all your time

MAGGIE Oh, come now, Sherry It isn't as bad as that.

WHITESIDE I have not even been able to reach you, not knowing what haylofts you frequent

MAGGIE Oh, stop behaving like a spoiled child, Sherry

WHITESIDE Don't take that patronizing tone with me, you flea-bitten Cleopatra I am sick and tired of your sneaking out like some lovesick high-school girl every time my back is turned.

MAGGIE Well, Sherry— (She pulls together the library doors and faces WHITESIDE I'm afraid you've hit the nail on the head (With a little flourish, she removes her hat)

WHITESIDE Stop acting like Zasu Pitts and explain yourself

MAGGIE I'll make it quick, Sherry I'm in love

WHITESIDE Nonsense This is merely delayed puberty

MAGGIE No, Sherry, I'm afraid this is it You're going to lose a very excellent secretary

WHITESIDE. You are out of your mind

MAGGIE Yes, I think I am, a little. But I'm a girl who's waited a long time for this to happen, and now it has Mr Jefferson doesn't know it yet, but I'm going to try my darned est to marry him

WHITESIDE (as she pauses) Is that all?

MAGGIE Yes, except that—well—I suppose this is what might be called my resignation—as soon as you've got someone else

WHITESIDE (there is a slight pause) Now listen to me, Maggie We have been together for a long time You are indispensable to me, but I think I am unselfish enough not to let that stand in the way where your happiness is concerned Because, whether you know it or not, I have a deep affection for you

MAGGIE I know that, Sherry.

WHITESIDE That being the case, I will not stand by and allow you to make a fool of yourself

MAGGIE I'm not, Sherry

WHITESIDE You are, my dear You are behaving like a Booth Tarkenton heroine It's—it's incredible I cannot believe that a girl who for the past ten years has had the great of the world served up on a platter before her—I cannot believe that it is anything but a kind of temporary insanity when you are swept off your feet in seven days by a second-rate, small-town newspaperman

MAGGIE Sherry, I can't explain what's happened I can only tell you that it's so It's hard for me to believe too, Sherry Here I am, a hard-bitten old cynic, behaving like *True Story Magazine*, and liking it Discovering the moon, and ice-skating—I keep laughing to myself all the time, but there it is What can I do about it, Sherry? I'm in love

WHITESIDE (with sudden decision) We're leaving here tomorrow Hip or no hip, we're leaving here tomorrow I don't care if I fracture the other one Get me a train schedule and start packing I'll pull you out of this, Miss Stardust I'll get the ants out of those moonlit pants

MAGGIE It's no good, Sherry I'd be back on the next streamlined train

WHITESIDE It's completely unbelievable Can you see yourself, the wife of the editor of the *Mesaha Journal*, having an evening at home for Mr and Mrs Stanley, Mr and Mrs Poop-Face, and the members of the Book-of-the-Month Club?

MAGGIE Sherry, I've had ten years of the great figures of our time, and don't think I'm not grateful to you for it I've loved every minute of it. They've been wonderful years, Sherry Gay and stimulating—why, I don't think anyone has ever had the fun we've had But a girl can laugh all the time, Sherry There comes a time when she wants—Bert Jefferson You don't know Bert, Sherry He's gentle, and he's unassuming, and—well, I love him, that's all

WHITESIDE I see Well, I remain completely unconvinced You are drugging yourself into this Joan Crawford fantasy, and before you become completely anesthetized I shall do everything in my power to bring you to your senses

MAGGIE (wheeling on him) Now listen to me, Whiteside I know you Lay off I know what a devil you can be I've seen you do it to other people, but don't you dare to do it to me Don't drug yourself into the idea that all you're thinking of is my happiness You're thinking of yourself a little bit, too, and all those months of breaking in somebody new I've seen you in a passion before when your life has been disrupted, and you couldn't dine in Calcutta on July twelfth with Boo-Boo Well, that's too bad, but there it is I'm going to marry Bert if he'll have me, and don't you dare try any of your tricks I'm on to every one of them So lay off That's my message to you, Big Lord Fauntleroy (And she is up the stairs Left stewing in his own juice, MR WHITESIDE is in a perfect fury He bangs the arm of his chair, then slaps at the manuscript in his lap As he does so, the dawn of an idea comes into his mind He sits perfectly

still for a moment, thinking it over. Then, with a slow smile, he takes the manuscript out of its envelope. He looks at the title page, ruffles through the script, then stops and thinks again. His face breaks out into one great smile. Then he quickly wheels himself over to the table and hunts hurriedly through a pile of old cablegrams and letters, until he finds the one he wants. With this in his hand, he takes up the telephone receiver.)

WHITESIDE (in a lowered voice) Long distance, please. I want to put in a trans-Atlantic call. (He looks at the cablegram again for confirmation.) Hello. Trans-Atlantic operator? This is Mesalia one four two. I want to talk to Miss Lorraine Sheldon—S-h-e-l-d-o-n. She's on the Normandie. It sailed from Southampton day before yesterday. Will it take long? All right. My name is Whiteside. Thank you. (He hangs up as the door bell rings. He goes back to the manuscript again and looks through it. JOHN then ushers in DR BRADLEY.)

DR BRADLEY (heartily, as usual) Well, well! Good evening, Mr Whiteside!

WHITESIDE Come back tomorrow—I'm busy.

DR BRADLEY (turning cute) Now what would be the best news that I could possibly bring you?

WHITESIDE You have hydrophobia.

DR BRADLEY (laughing it off) No, no. Mr Whiteside, you are a well man. You can get up and walk now. You can leave here tomorrow.

WHITESIDE What do you mean?

DR BRADLEY Well, sir! I looked at those X-rays again this morning, and do you know what? I had been looking at the wrong X-rays. I had been looking at old Mrs Moffat's X-rays. You are perfectly, absolutely well!

WHITESIDE Lower your voice, will you?

DR BRADLEY What's the matter? Aren't you pleased?

WHITESIDE Delighted. Naturally. Ah—this is a very unexpected bit of news, however. It comes at a very curious moment. (He is thinking fast, suddenly he gets an idea. He clears his throat and looks around apprehensively.) Dr Bradley, I—ah—I have some good news for you, too. I have been reading your book—ah—Forty Years—what is it?

DR BRADLEY (eagerly) An Ohw Doctor—yes?

WHITESIDE I consider it extremely close to being one of the great literary contributions of our time.

DR BRADLEY Mr Whiteside!

WHITESIDE So strongly do I feel about it, Dr Bradley, that I have a proposition to make to you. Just here and there the book is a little uneven, a little rough. What I would like to do is to stay here in Mesalia and work with you on it.

DR BRADLEY (all choked up). Mr Whiteside, I would be so terribly honored—

WHITESIDE Yes. But there is just one difficulty. You see, if my lecturer

bureau and my radio sponsors were to learn that I am well, they would insist on my fulfilling my contracts, and I would be forced to leave Mesalia. Therefore, we must not tell anyone—not anyone at all—that I am well

DR BRADLEY I see I see.

WHITESIDE Not even Miss Cutler, you understand

DR BRADLEY No, I won't Not a soul Not even my wife

WHITESIDE That's fine.

DR BRADLEY When do we start work—tonight? I've got just one patient that's dying and then I'll be perfectly free
(The phone rings)

WHITESIDE (waving him away) Ah—tomorrow morning This is a private call—would you forgive me? Hello Yes, I'm on (He turns again to the DOCTOR) Tomorrow morning

DR BRADLEY Tomorrow morning it is Good night You've made me very proud, Mr Whiteside (He goes)

WHITESIDE (again on the phone) Yes, yes, this is Mr Whiteside on the phone Put them through Hello Is this my Blossom Girl? How are you, my lovely? No, no, I'm all right Yes, still out here

Lorraine dear, when do you land in New York? Tuesday? That's fine Now listen closely, my pet I've great news for you I've discovered a wonderful play with an enchanting part in it for you Cornell would give her eye teeth to play it, but I think I can get it for you.

... Now wait, wait Let me tell you The author is a young newspaper man in this town Of course he wants Cornell, but if you jump on a train and get right out here, I think you could swing it, if you play your cards right No, he's young, and very attractive, and just your dish, my dear It just takes a little doing, and you're the girl that can do it Isn't that exciting, my pet? Yes Yes, that's right And look Don't send me any messages. Just get on a train and arrive

Oh, no, don't thank me, my darling It's perfectly all right Have a nice trip and hurry out here Good-bye, my blossom (He hangs up and looks guiltily around Then he straightens up and gleefully rubs his hands together MISS PREEN enters medicine in hand, and frightened, as usual.)

WHITESIDE (jovial as hell) Hello, Miss Preen My, you're looking radiant this evening.

MISS PREEN (staggered) What?

WHITESIDE Nothing Nothing at all Just said you are ravishing (He takes the medicine from her and swallows it at one gulp MISS PREEN, still staggered, retreats into the library, just as MAGGIE comes down the stairs She is dressed for the street)

MAGGIE (pausing on the landing). Sherry, I'm sorry for what I said before I'm afraid I was a little unjust.

WHITESIDE (all nobility) That's all right, Maggie dear We all lose our tempers now and then

MAGGIE I promised to have dinner

with Bert and go to a movie, but we'll come back and play cribbage with you instead

hears the doors close Then his face lights up again and he bursts happily into song as he wheels himself into the library)

WHITESIDE Fine

WHITESIDE

MAGGIE See you soon, Sherry dear
(*She kisses him lightly on the forehead and goes on her way*
WHITESIDE looks after her until he

'Tse des a 'ittle wabbit in the sun-shine,
I'se des a 'ittle wabbit in the wain—"

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

A week later, late afternoon

The room is now dominated by a large Christmas tree, set in the curve of the staircase, and hung with the customary Christmas ornaments

SARAH and JOHN are passing in and out of the library, bringing forth huge packages which they are placing under the tree MAGGIE sits at a little table at one side, going through a pile of correspondence

JOHN Well, I guess that's all there are, Miss Cutler They're all under the tree

MAGGIE Thank you, John

SARAH My, I never saw anyone get so many Christmas presents I can hardly wait to see what's in 'em

JOHN When'll Mr Whiteside open them, Miss Cutler?

MAGGIE Well, John, you see Christmas is Mr Whiteside's personal property He invented it and it belongs to him First thing tomorrow morning, Mr Whiteside will open each and every present, and there will be the damndest fuss you ever saw.

SARAH (*bending over the packages*)
My, look who he's got presents from! Shirley Temple, William Lyon Phelps, Billy Rose, Ethel Waters, Somerset Maugham—I can hardly wait for tonight.

(*The doorbell rings JOHN departs for the door*)

SARAH My, it certainly is wonderful And Mr Whiteside's tree is so beautiful, too Mr and Mrs Stanley had to put theirs in their bedroom, you know They can hardly undress at night
(*It is BERT JEFFERSON who enters*)

BERT Hello, Maggie Merry Christmas, Sarah

SARAH Merry Christmas, Mr Jefferson.

(She and JOHN disappear into the dining room)

BERT (observing the pile of packages under the tree) Say, business is good, isn't it? My, what a little quiet blackmail and a weekly radio hour can get you. What did his sponsors give him?

MAGGIE They gave him a full year's supply of their product, Cream of Mush.

BERT Well, he'll give it right back to them over the air.

MAGGIE Wait until you hear tonight's broadcast, old fellow. It's so sticky I haven't been able to get it off my fingers since I copied it.

BERT I'll bet. Look, I'll come clean. Under the influence of God knows what I have just bought you a Christmas present.

MAGGIE (surprised) Why, Mr Jefferson, sir.

BERT Only I'd like you to see it before I throw away my hard-earned money. Can you run downtown with me and take a look at it?

MAGGIE Bert, this is very sweet of you. I'm quite touched. What is it? I can't wait.

BERT A two years' subscription to Screen Romances. Listen, do you think I'm going to tell you? Come down and see.

MAGGIE (she calls into the library) Sherry! Sherry, I'm going out for a few minutes. With Horace Greeley.

I won't be long. (She goes into the hallway for her coat and hat.)

BERT (raising his voice) Noel, Noel, Mr W! How about some cribbage after your broadcast tonight? (The WHITESIDE wheelchair is rolling into the room.)

WHITESIDE No, I will not play cribbage with you, Klondike Harry. You have been swindling the be Jesus out of me for two weeks. Where are you off to now, Madame Butterfly?

MAGGIE I'm being given a Christmas present. Anything you want done downtown?

WHITESIDE 'Es B'ing baby a loll pop. What are you giving me for Christmas, Jefferson? I have enriched your feeble life beyond your capacity to repay me.

BERT Yes, that's what I figured, so I'm not giving you anything.

WHITESIDE I see. Well, I was giving you my old truss, but now I shan't. Maggie, what time are those radio men coming?

MAGGIE About six-thirty—I'll be here. You've got to cut, Sherry. You're four minutes over. Oh, by the way, there was a wire from Beverly. It's there somewhere. He doesn't know what train he can get out of Chicago, but he'll be here some time this evening.

WHITESIDE Good! Is he staying over night?

MAGGIE No, he has to get right out again. He's sailing Friday on the *Queen Mary*.

BERT Think I could peek in at the window and get a look at him? Beverly Carlton used to be one of my heroes

WHITESIDE Used to be, you ink-stained hack? Beverly Carlton is the greatest single talent in the English theatre today. Take this illiterate numbskull out of my sight, Maggie, and don't bring him back

BERT Yes, Mr Whiteside, sir I won't come back until Beverly Carlton gets here

MAGGIE (as they go on their way) Where are we going, Bert? I want to know what you've bought me—I'm like a ten-year-old kid

BERT (laughing a little) You know, you look like a ten-year-old kid right now, Maggie, at that

(They are out of earshot by this time **WHITESIDE** looks after them intently, listens until the door closes. He considers for a second, then wheels himself over to the telephone)

WHITESIDE (on the phone) Will you give me the Mansion House, please?

No, I don't know the number
Hello? Mansion House?

Tell me, has a Miss Lorraine Sheldon arrived yet?

Yes, that's right—Miss Lorraine Sheldon. From New York

She hasn't, eh? Thank you (He hangs up, drums with his fingers on the armchair, looks at his watch. He slaps his knees impatiently, stretches. Then, vexed at his self-imposed imprisonment, he looks cautiously around the room, peers up the stairs. Then, slowly, he gets out of his chair, standing beside it, he indulges in a few mild calisthenics, looking cautiously around all the

while. Then the sound of the library doors being opened sends him scurrying back to his chair. It is **MISS PREEN** who emerges.)

WHITESIDE (annoyed) What do you want, coming in like that? Why don't you knock before you come into a room?

MISS PREEN But—I wasn't coming in. I was coming out.

WHITESIDE Miss Preen, you are obviously in this room. That is true, isn't it?

MISS PREEN Yes, it is, but—

WHITESIDE Therefore you came in. Hereafter, please knock (Before **MISS PREEN** can reply, however, **JOHN** enters from the dining room.)

JOHN (en route to the front door) There'll be some expressmen here with a crate, Mr Whiteside. I told them to come around the front.

WHITESIDE Thank you, John. Don't stand there, Miss Preen. You look like a frozen custard. Go away.

MISS PREEN (controlling herself as best as she can) Yes, sir. (She goes.) (At the same time two **EXPRESSMEN**, carrying a crate, enter from the front door.)

JOHN Bring it right in here. Careful here—don't scrape the wall. Why, it's some kind of animals.

EXPRESSMAN I'll say it's animals. We had to feed 'em at seven o'clock this morning.

WHITESIDE Bring it over here, John. Who's it from?

JOHN (*reading from the top of the crate as they set it down*) Admiral Richard E. Byrd Say!

WHITESIDE (*peering through the slats*) Why, they're penguins Two—three—four penguins Hello, my pretties

EXPRESSMAN Directions for feeding are right on top These two slats are open

JOHN (*reading*) "To be fed only whale blubber, eels and cracked lobster"

EXPRESSMAN. They got Coca-Cola this morning And liked it (*They go*)

WHITESIDE (*peering through the slats again*) Hello, hello, hello You know, they make the most entrancing companions, John Admiral Byrd has one that goes on all his lecture tours I want these put right in the library with me Take 'em right in

JOHN (*picking up the crate*) Yes, sir

WHITESIDE Better tell Sarah to order a couple of dozen lobsters I don't suppose there's any whale blubber in Mesalia

(*At which point DR BRADLEY obligingly enters from the hall MR WHITESIDE is equal to the occasion*)

WHITESIDE (*with just the merest glance at the DOCTOR*) Oh, yes, there is

DR BRADLEY The door was open, so I— Good afternoon, Mr Whiteside And Merry Christmas

WHITESIDE Merry Christmas, Merry Christmas Do you happen to know if eels are in season, Doctor?

DR BRADLEY How's that?

WHITESIDE Never mind I was a fool to ask you

(*JOHN returns from the library, carefully closing the doors*)

JOHN I opened those two slats a little, Mr Whiteside—they seemed so crowded in there

WHITESIDE Thank you, John (*JOHN goes on his way*) On your way downtown, Doctor, will you send these air mail? Miss Cutler forgot them (*He hands him a few letters*) Good-bye Sorry you dropped in just now I have to do my Yogi exercises (*He folds his arms, leans back and closes his eyes*)

DR BRADLEY But, Mr Whiteside, it's been a week now My book, you know—when are we going to start work on the book? (*WHITESIDE, his eyes still closed, places his fingers to his lips, for absolute silence*) I was hoping that today you'd be— (*He stops short as MISS PREEN returns from the dining room*) Good afternoon, Miss Preen

MISS PREEN Good afternoon, Dr Bradley (*She opens the doors to enter the library, then freezes in her tracks She closes the doors again and turns to the DOCTOR, glassy-eyed She raises a trembling hand to her forehead*) Doctor, perhaps I'm—not well, but—when I opened the doors just now I thought I saw a penguin with a thermometer in its mouth

WHITESIDE What's this? Have those penguins got out of their crate?

MISS PREEN. Oh, thank God I thought perhaps the strain had been too much

DR BRADLEY (*incredulous*) Penguins?

WHITESIDE Yes Doctor, will you go in and capture them, please, and put them back in the crate? There're four of them

DR BRADLEY (*somewhat staggered*) Very well Do you suppose that later on, Mr Whiteside, we might—

WHITESIDE We'll see, we'll see First catch the penguins And, Miss Preen, will you amuse them, please, until I come in?

MISS PREEN (*swallowing hard*) Yes, sir
(*Meanwhile JOHN has descended the stairs*)

JOHN The Christmas tree just fell on Mr Stanley He's got a big bump on his forehead

WHITESIDE (*brightly*) Why, isn't that too bad? Go ahead, Doctor Go on, Miss Preen
(*RICHARD pops in from the hallway*)

RICHARD Hello, Mr Whiteside

WHITESIDE Hello, Dickie, my boy

DR BRADLEY (*still lingering*) Mr Whiteside, will you have some time later?

WHITESIDE (*impatient*) I don't know, Doctor I'm busy now

DR BRADLEY Well, suppose I wait a little while? I'll—I'll wait a little while (*He goes into the library.*)

WHITESIDE Dr Bradley is the greatest living argument for mercy killings Well, Dickie, would you like a candid camera shot of my left nostril this evening?

RICHARD I'm sort of stocked up on those Have you got a minute to look at some new ones I've taken?

WHITESIDE I certainly have Why, these are splendid, Richard There's real artistry in them—they're as good as anything by Margaret Bourke-White I like all the things you've shown me This is the essence of photographic journalism

RICHARD Say, I didn't know they were as good as that I just like to take pictures, that's all

WHITESIDE Richard, I've been meaning to talk to you about this You're not just a kid fooling with a camera any more These are good This is what you ought to do You ought to get out of here and do some of the things you were telling me about Just get on a boat and get off wherever it stops Galveston, Mexico, Singapore—work your way through and just take pictures—everything

RICHARD Say, wouldn't I like to, though! It's what I've been dreaming of for years If I could do that I'd be the happiest guy in the world

WHITESIDE Well, why can't you do it? If I were your age, I'd do it like a shot

RICHARD Well, you know why Dad.

WHITESIDE Richard, do you really want to do this more than anything else in the world?

RICHARD I certainly do

WHITESIDE Then do it
(JUNE comes quietly in from the dining room Obviously there is something on her mind)

JUNE Hello, Dick Good afternoon,
Mr Whiteside

WHITESIDE Hello, my lovely
So I'm afraid it's up to you, Richard

RICHARD I guess it is Well, thank
you, Mr Whiteside You've been
swell and I'll never forget it

WHITESIDE Righto, Richard

RICHARD June, are you coming up-
stairs?

JUNE Ah—in a few minutes, Rich-
ard

RICHARD Well— knock on my door,
will you? I want to talk to you

JUNE Yes, I will
(RICHARD disappears up the stairs)

WHITESIDE (brightly, opening his
book) June, my lamb, you were too
young to know about the Elwell mur-
der, weren't you? Completely fasci-
nating I have about five favorite
murders, and the Elwell case is one
of them Would you like to hear
about it?

JUNE Well, Mr Whiteside, I wanted
to talk to you Would you mind, for
a few minutes? It's important

WHITESIDE Why, certainly, my dear
I take it this is all about your young
Lothario at the factory?

JUNE Yes I just can't seem to make
Father understand It's like talking
to a blank wall He won't meet him—
he won't even talk about it What are
we going to do, Mr Whiteside?
Sandy and I love each other I don't
know where to turn

WHITESIDE My dear, I'd like to meet
this young man I'd like to see him
for myself

JUNE Would you, Mr Whiteside?
Would you meet him? He's—he's out-
side now He's in the kitchen

WHITESIDE Good! Bring him in

JUNE (hesitating) Mr Whiteside,
he's—he's a very sensitive boy You
will be nice to him, won't you?

WHITESIDE God damn it, June, when
will you learn that I am *always* kind
and courteous! Bring this idiot in!

JUNE (calling through the dining
room in a low voice) Sandy
Sandy (She stands aside as
a young man enters Twenty-three or
-four, keen-looking, neatly but simply
dressed) Here he is, Mr Whiteside
This is Sandy

SANDY How do you do, sir?

WHITESIDE How do you do? Young
man, I've been hearing a good deal
about you from June this past week
I seems, if I have been correctly in-
formed, that you two babes in the
woods have quietly gone out of your
minds

JUNE There's another name for it
It's called love

WHITESIDE Well, you've come to
the right place Dr Shendan White-

side, Broken Hearts Mended, Brakes Reined, Hamburgers. Go right ahead

SANDY Well, if June has told you anything at all, Mr Whiteside, you know the jam we're in You see, I work for the union, Mr Whiteside I'm an organizer I've been organizing the men in Mr Stanley's factory, and Mr Stanley's pretty sore about it

WHITESIDE I'll bet

SANDY Did June tell you that?

WHITESIDE Yes, she did

SANDY Well, that being the case, Mr Whiteside, I don't think I have the right to try to influence June If she marries me it means a definite break with her family, and I don't like to bring that about But Mr Stanley's so stubborn about it, so arbitrary You know, this is not something I've done just to spite him We fell in love with each other But Mr Stanley behaves as though it were all a big plot—John L Lewis sent me here just to marry his daughter

JUNE He's tried to fire Sandy twice, out at the factory, but he couldn't on account of the Wagner Act, thank God!

SANDY Yes, he thinks I wrote that, too

JUNE If he'd only let me talk to him If he'd let Sandy talk to him

SANDY Well, we've gone over all that, June Anyway, this morning I got word I'm needed in Chicago I may have to go on to Frisco from there So you see the jam we're in

JUNE Sandy's leaving tonight, Mr. Whiteside He'll probably be gone a year We've simply got to decide. Now

WHITESIDE My dear, this is absurdly simple It's no problem at all Now to my jaundiced eye— (*The telephone rings*) Oh-h! Hello . Yes

This is Whiteside Excuse me—it's a trans-Atlantic call Yes? Yes, I'm on Who's calling me? (*His tone suddenly becomes one of keen delight*) All right—put her through (*He turns to the young pair*) It's Gertrude Stein, in Paris

Hello Hello, Gertie! How's my little nightingale? Yes, I hoped you would How'd you know I was here? I see Well, it's wonderful of you to call Yes. Yes, I'm listening Ten seconds more? (*A quick aside to the others*) It'll be Christmas in Paris in ten seconds and every year—yes? Yes, Gertie, I hear them It's wonderful As though they were right outside June! (*He holds the receiver out to JUNE for a second*) Thank you, my dear, and a very Merry Christmas to you Don't forget we're dining on June tenth Pourquoi ne pas se réunir chez vous après? Tachez d'avoir Picasso, Matisse, Cocteau Je serai seulement là pour quelques jours et je veux voir tout le monde N'est-ce pas? Ah! Bon! Au revoir—au revoir (*He hangs up*) You know what that was you listened to? The bells of Notre Dame

JUNE Not really!

WHITESIDE Miss Stein calls me every Christmas, no matter where I am, so that I can hear them Two years ago I was walking on the bottom of the ocean in a diving suit with William Beebe, but she got me Now,

where were we? Oh, yes . . . June, I like your young man. I have an unerring instinct about people—I've never been wrong. That's why I wanted to meet him. My feeling is that you two will be very happy together. Whatever his beliefs are, he's entitled to them, and you shouldn't let anything stand in your way. As I see it, it's no problem at all. Stripped of its externals, what does it come down to? Your father. The possibility of making him unhappy. Is that right?

JUNE Very unhappy

WHITESIDE That isn't the point. Suppose your parents are unhappy—it's good for them. Develops their characters. Look at me. I left home at the age of four and haven't been back since. They hear me on the radio and that's enough for them.

SANDY Then—your advice is to go ahead, Mr. Whiteside?

WHITESIDE It is. Marry him tonight, June.

JUNE (almost afraid to make the leap) You—you mean that, Mr. Whiteside?

WHITESIDE (bellowing) No, I mean you should marry Senator Borah. If I didn't mean it I wouldn't say it. What do you want me to do—say it all over again? My own opinion is—(The voice of MR. STANLEY is heard at the head of the stairs "Come on, Daisy—stop dawdling.") JUNE quickly pushes her young man out of the room, as MR. and MRS. STANLEY descend the stairs.)

STANLEY (with deep sarcasm) Forgive us for trespassing, Mr. Whiteside.

WHITESIDE Not at all, old fellow—not at all. It's Christmas, you know. Merry Christmas, Merry Christmas.

MRS. STANLEY (nervously) Ah—yes. Merry Christmas. Would you like to come along with us, June? We're taking some presents over to the Dexters.

JUNE No—no, thank you, Mother. I—I have to write some letters. (She hurries up the stairs.)

STANLEY (who has been donning his coat) Come along, Daisy. (Turning, he reveals a great patch of court plaster on his head.)

WHITESIDE (entirely too sweetly) Why, Mr. Stanley, what happened to your forehead? Did you have an accident?

STANLEY (just as sweetly) No, Mr. Whiteside. I'm taking boxing lessons. Come, Daisy. (They go.) (HARRIET, who has been hovering at the head of the stairs, hurries down as the STANLEYS depart. She is carrying a little Christmas package.)

HARRIET Dear Mr. Whiteside, I've been trying all day to see you. To give you—thus.

WHITESIDE Why, Miss Stanley. A Christmas gift for me?

HARRIET It's only a trifle, but I wanted you to have it. It's a picture of me as I used to be. It was taken on another Christmas Eve, many years ago. Don't open it till the stroke of midnight, will you? (The doorbell rings. HARRIET looks apprehensively over her shoulder.) Merry Christmas, dear Mr. Whiteside. Merry Christmas.

WHITESIDE. Merry Christmas to you, Miss Stanley, and thank you
(*She glides out of the room. In the hallway, as JOHN opens the door, we hear a woman's voice, liquid and melting* "This is the Stanley residence, isn't it?" "Yes, it is" "I've come to see Mr Whiteside. Will you tell him Miss Sheldon is here?"")

WHITESIDE. Lorraine! My Blossom Girl!

LORRAINE (*coming into view*) Sherry, my sweet! (*And quite a view it is* LORRAINE SHELDON is known as the most chic actress on the New York or London stage, and justly so. *She glitters as she walks. She is beautiful, and even, God save the word, glamorous.* Her rank as one of the Ten Best-Dressed Women of the World is richly deserved. She is, in short, a siren of no mean talents, and knows it.)

LORRAINE (*wasting no time*) Oh, darling, look at that poor sweet tortured face! Let me kiss it! You poor darling, your eyes have a kind of galling compassion. How drawn you are! Sherry, my sweet, I want to cry

WHITESIDE. All right, all right. You've made a very nice entrance. Now relax, dear.

LORRAINE. But, Sherry, darling, I've been so worried. And now seeing you in that chair.

WHITESIDE. This chair fits my fanny as nothing else ever has. I feel better than I have in years, and my only concern is news of the outside world. So take that skunk off and tell me everything. How are you, my dear?

LORRAINE (*removing a cascade of silver fox from her shoulders*) Darling,

I'm so relieved. You look perfectly wonderful—I never saw you look better. My dear, do I look a wreck? I just dashed through New York. Didn't do a thing about Christmas. Hattie Carnegie and had my hair done, and got right on the train. And the *Normandie* coming back was simply hectic. Fun, you know, but simply exhausting. Jock Whitney, and Cary Grant, and Dorothy di Frasso—it was too exhausting. And of course London before that was so magnificent, my dear—well, I simply never got to bed at all. Darling, I've so much to tell you I don't know where to start.

WHITESIDE. Well, start with the dirt first, dear—that's what I want to hear.

LORRAINE. Let me see. Well, Sybil Cartwright got thrown right out of *Ciro's*—it was the night before I sailed. She was wearing one of those new cellophane dresses, and you could absolutely see Trafalgar Square. And, oh, yes—Sir Harry Montrose—the painter, you know—is suing his mother for disorderly conduct. It's just shocked everyone. Oh, and before I forget—Anthony Eden told me he's going to be on your New Year's broadcast, and he gave me a message for you. He said for God's sake not to introduce him again as the English Grover Whalen.

WHITESIDE. Nonsense. Now come, dear, what about you? What about your love life? I don't believe for one moment that you never got to bed at all, if you'll pardon the expression.

LORRAINE. Sherry dear, you're dreadful.

WHITESIDE. What about that splendid bit of English mutton, Lord Bontmley? Haven't you booked him yet?

LORRAINE Sherry, please Cedric is a very dear friend of mine

WHITESIDE Now, Blossom Girl, this is Sherry Don't try to pull the bed clothes over my eyes Don't tell me you wouldn't like to be Lady Bottomley, with a hundred thousand pounds a year and twelve castles By the way, has he had his teeth fixed yet? Every time I order Roquefort cheese I think of those teeth

LORRAINE Sherry, really! Cedric may not be brilliant, but he's rather sweet, poor lamb, and he's very fond of me, and he does represent a kind of English way of living that I like Surrey, and London for the season—shooting box in Scotland—that lovely old castle in Wales You were there, Sherry—you know what I mean

WHITESIDE Mm I do indeed

LORRAINE Well, really, Sherry, why not? If I can marry Cedric I don't know why I shouldn't Shall I tell you something, Sherry? I think, from something he said just before I sailed, that he's finally coming around to it It wasn't definite, mind you, but—don't be surprised if I am Lady Bottomley before very long

WHITESIDE Lady Bottomley! Won't Kansas City be surprised! However, I shall be a flower girl and give the groom an iron toothpick as a wedding present Come ahead, my blossom—let's hear some more of your skull-duggery

(The library doors are quietly opened at this point and the DOCTOR's head appears)

DR BRADLEY *(in a heavy whisper)*
Mr Whiteside

WHITESIDE What? No, no—not now I'm busy
(The DOCTOR disappears)

LORRAINE Who's that?

WHITESIDE He's fixing the plumbing Now come on, come on—I want more news

LORRAINE But, Sherry, what about this play? After all, I've come all the way from New York—even on Christmas Eve—I've been so excited ever since your phone call Where is it? When can I read it?

WHITESIDE Well, here's the situation This young author—his name is Bert Jefferson—brought me the play with the understanding that I send it to Kit Cornell It's a magnificent part, and God knows I feel disloyal to Kit, but there you are Now I've done this much—the rest is up to you He's young and attractive—now, just how you'll go about persuading him, I'm sure you know more about that than I do

LORRAINE Darling, how can I ever thank you? Does he know I'm coming—Mr Jefferson, I mean?

WHITESIDE No, no You're just out here visiting me You'll meet him, and that's that Get him to take you to dinner, and work around to the play Good God, I don't have to tell you how to do these things How did you get all those other parts?

LORRAINE Sherry! Well, I'll go back to the hotel and get into something more attractive I just dumped my bags and rushed right over here Darling, you're wonderful *(Lightly kissing him)*

WHITESIDE All right—run along and get into your working clothes. Then come right back here and spend Christmas Eve with Sherry and I'll have Mr Jefferson on tap. By the way, I've got a little surprise for you. Who do you think's paying me a flying visit tonight? None other than your old friend and fellow actor, Beverly Carlton.

LORRAINE (*not too delighted*) Really? Beverly? I thought he was being glamorous again on a tramp steamer.

WHITESIDE Come, come, dear—mustn't be bitter because he got better notices than you did.

LORRAINE Don't be silly, Sherry. I never read notices. I simply wouldn't care to act with him again, that's all. He's not staying here, is he? I hope not!

WHITESIDE Temper, temper, temper. No, he's not. Where'd you get that diamond clip, dear? That's a new bit of loot, isn't it?

LORRAINE Haven't you seen this before? Cedric gave it to me for his mother's birthday. Look, darling, I've got a taxi outside. If I'm going to get back here—
(*At this point the voice of MAGGIE is heard in the hallway*)

MAGGIE Sherry, what do you think? I've just been given the most beautiful.
(*She stops short and comes to a dead halt as she sees LORRAINE*)

LORRAINE Oh, hello, Maggie. I knew you must be around somewhere. How are you, my dear?

WHITESIDE Santa's been at work, my pet. Blossom Girl just dropped in out of the blue and surprised us.

MAGGIE (*quietly*) Hello, Lorraine.

WHITESIDE (*as JEFFERSON appears*) Who's that—Bert? This is Mr Bert Jefferson, Lorraine Young newspaperman. Miss Lorraine Sheldon.

BERT How do you do, Miss Sheldon?

LORRAINE How do you do? I didn't quite catch the name—Jefferson?

WHITESIDE (*sweetly*) That's right, Pet.

LORRAINE (*full steam ahead*) Why, Mr Jefferson, you don't look like a newspaperman. You don't look like a newspaperman at all.

BERT Really? I thought it was written all over me in neon lights.

LORRAINE Oh, no, not at all. I should have said you were—oh, I don't know—an aviator or an explorer or something. They have that same kind of dash about them. I'm simply enchanted with your town, Mr Jefferson. It gives one such a warm, gracious feeling. Tell me—have you lived here all your life?

BERT Practically.

WHITESIDE If you wish to hear the story of his life, Lorraine, kindly do so on your own time. Maggie and I have work to do. Get out of here, Jefferson. On your way, Blossom.

LORRAINE He's the world's rudest man, isn't he? Can I drop you, Mr Jefferson? I'm going down to the—Mansion House, I think it's called.

BERT Thank you, but I've got my car Suppose I drop you?

LORRAINE Oh, would you? That'd be lovely—we'll send the taxi off See you in a little while Sherry 'Bye, Maggie

BERT. Good-bye, Miss C (*He turns to WHITESIDE*) I'm invited back for dinner, am I not?

WHITESIDE Yes—yes, you are At Christmas I always feed the needy Now please stop oozing out—get out

LORRAINE Come on, Mr Jefferson I want to hear more about this charming little town And I want to know a good deal about you, too (*And they are gone There is a slight but pregnant pause after they go MAGGIE simply stands looking at WHITESIDE, waiting for what may come forth*)

WHITESIDE (*as though nothing had happened*) Now let's see, have you got a copy of that broadcast? How much did you say they wanted out—four minutes?

MAGGIE That's right—four minutes . She's looking very well, isn't she?

WHITESIDE (*busy with his manuscript*). What's that? Who?

MAGGIE The Countess di Pushover . Quite a surprise, wasn't it—her dropping in?

WHITESIDE Yes—yes, it was Now come on, Maggie, come on Get to work

MAGGIE Why, she must have gone through New York like a dose of salts How long's she going to stay?

WHITESIDE (*completely absorbed*). What? Oh, I don't know—a few days (*He reads from his manuscript*) "At this joyous season of the year, when in the hearts of men—" I can't cut that

MAGGIE Isn't it curious? There was Lorraine, snug as a bug in somebody's bed on the *Normandie*—

WHITESIDE (*so busy*) "Ere the Yuletide season pass—"

MAGGIE (*quietly taking the manuscript out of his hands*) Now, Sherry dear, we will talk a bit

WHITESIDE Now look here, Maggie Just because a friend of mine happens to come out to spend Christmas with me— (*The doorbell rings*) I have a hunch that's Beverly Maggie, see if it is Go ahead—run! Run! (*MAGGIE looks at him—right through him, in fact Then she goes slowly toward the door We hear her voice at the door "Beverly!" Then, in clipped English tones "Maggie! A large, moist, incestuous kiss for my maggie!"*)

WHITESIDE (*roaring*) Come in here, you Piccadilly pen-pusher, and gaze upon a soul in agony (*BEVERLY CARLTON enters, arm in arm with MAGGIE Very confident, very British, very Beverly Carlton*)

BEVERLY Don't tell me how you are, Sherry dear I want none of the tiresome details I have only a little time, so conversation will be entirely about me, and I shall love it Shall I tell you how I glittered through the South Seas like a silver scimitar, or would you rather hear how I frolicked through Zambesia, raping the Major General's daughter and finishing a

three-act play at the same time? . . . Maggie dear, you are the moon-flower of my middle age, and I love you very much. Say something beautiful to me. Sherry dear, without going into mountainous waves of self-pity, how are you?

WHITESIDE I'm fine, you presumptuous cockney. Now, how was the trip, wonderful?

BEVERLY Fabulous. I did a fantastic amount of work. By the way, did I glimpse that little boudoir butterfly, La Sheldon, in a motor-car as I came up the driveway?

MAGGIE You did indeed. She's paying us a Christmas visit.

BEVERLY Dear girl! They do say she set fire to her mother, but I don't believe it. . . . Sherry, my evil one, not only have I written the finest comedy since *Mohère*, but also the best revue since my last one and an operetta that frightens me—it's so good. I shall play it for eight weeks in London and six in New York—that's all. No matinees. Then I am off to the Grecian Islands. . . . Maggie, why don't you come along? Why don't you desert this cannonball of fluff and come with me?

MAGGIE Beverly dear, be careful. You're catching me at a good moment.

WHITESIDE (*changing the subject*) Tell me, did you have a good time in Hollywood? How long were you there?

BEVERLY Three unbelievable days. I saw everyone from Adrian to Zanuck. They came, poor dears, as to a shine. I was insufferably charming

and ruthlessly firm in refusing seven million dollars for two minutes' work.

WHITESIDE What about Banjo? Did you see my wonderful Banjo in Hollywood?

BEVERLY I did. He gave a dinner for me. I arrived, in white tie and tails, to be met at the door by two bewigged flunkies, who quietly proceeded to take my trousers off. I was then ushered, in my lemon silk drawers, into a room full of Norma Shearer, Claudette Colbert, and Aldous Huxley, among others. Dear, sweet, incomparable Banjo.

WHITESIDE I'll never forget that summer at Antibes, when Banjo put a microphone in Lorraine's mattress, and then played the record the next day at lunch.

BEVERLY I remember it indeed. Lorraine left Antibes by the next boat.

MAGGIE (*half to herself*) I wish Banjo were here now.

BEVERLY What's the matter, Maggie? Is Lorraine being her own sweet sick-making self?

MAGGIE You wouldn't take her to the Grecian Islands with you, would you, Beverly? Just for me?

WHITESIDE Now, now. Lorraine is a charming person who has gallantly given up her own Christmas to spend it with me.

BEVERLY Oh, I knew I had a bit of dirt for us all to nibble on. (*He draws a letter out of his pocket. Again the library doors are opened and the DOCTOR'S head comes through.*)

DR BRADLEY. Mr Whiteside

WHITESIDE No, no, not now. Go away
(*The DOCTOR withdraws*)

BEVERLY Have you kidnapped someone, Sherry?

WHITESIDE Yes, that was Charley Ross
Go ahead Is this something juicy?

BEVERLY Juicy as a pomegranate It is the latest report from London on the winter maneuvers of Miss Lorraine Sheldon against the left flank—in fact, all flanks—of Lord Cedric Bottomley Listen "Lorraine has just left us in a cloud of Chanel Number Five Since September, in her relentless pursuit of His Lordship, she has paused only to change girdles and check her oil She has chased him, panting, from castle to castle, till he finally took refuge, for several week-ends, in the gentlemen's lavatory of the House of Lords Practically no one is betting on the Derby this year, we are all making book on Lorraine She is sailing tomorrow on the *Normandie*, but would return on the *Yankee Clipper* if Bottomley so much as belches in her direction" Have you ever met Lord Bottomley, Magpie dear? (*He goes immediately into an impersonation of His Lordship Very British, very full of teeth, stuttering*) "No v-v-very good shooting today, blast it Only s-s-six partridges, f-f-four grouse, and the D-D-Duke of Sutherland"

WHITESIDE (*chuckling*) My God, that's Bottomley to the very bottom

BEVERLY (*still in character*) "R-r-r-ipping debate in the House today Old

Basil spoke for th-th-three hours. D-d-dropped dead at the end of it. Ripping"

MAGGIE You're making it up, Beverly No one sounds like that

WHITESIDE It's so good it's uncanny
Damn it, Beverly, why must you race right out of here? I never see enough of you, you ungrateful moppet

BEVERLY Sherry darling, I can only tell you that my love for you is so great that I changed trains at Chicago to spend ten minutes with you and wish you a Merry Christmas Merry Christmas, my lad My little Magpie (*A look at his watch*) And now I have just time for one magnificent number, to give you a taste of how brilliant the whole thing is It's the second number in the revue (*He strikes a chord on the piano, but before he can go further the telephone rings*)

WHITESIDE Oh, damn! Get nd of them, Maggie

MAGGIE Hello Oh, hello, Bert
Oh! Well, just a minute
Beverly, would you talk to a newspaperman for just two minutes? I kind of promised him

BEVERLY Won't have time, Magpie, unless he's under the piano

MAGGIE Oh! (*Into the phone*) Wait a minute (*To BEVERLY again*) Would you see him at the station, just for a minute before the train goes? (*BEVERLY nods*) Bert, go to the station and wait for him He'll be there in a few minutes . . . Bye.

WHITESIDE The stalls are impatient,
Beverly Let's have this second-rate
masterpiece

BEVERLY (*his fingers rippling over
the keys*) It's called "What Am I
to Do?"

"Oft in the nightfall
I think I might fall

Down from my perilous height,
Deep in the heart of me,
Always a part of me,

Quivering, shivering light

Run, little lady,

Ere the shady

Shafts of time

Barb you with their winged desire,

Singe you with their sultry fire

Softly a fluid

Druid

Meets me,

Olden

and golden

the dawn that greets me,

Chenshing,

Perishing,

Up to the stars

I climb

What am I to do

Toward ending this madness,

This sadness,

That's rending me through?

The flowers of yesteryear

Are haunting me,

Taunting me,

Darling, for wanting you

What am I to say

To warnings of sorrow

When morning's tomorrow

Greets the dew?

Will I see the cosmic Ritz

Shattered and scattered to bits?

What *not* am I to do?"

(*As he swings into the chorus for a
second time the doorbell rings, and
JOHN is glimpsed as he goes to the
door. It is a trio of RADIO MEN who*

*appear in the doorway, their arms
filled with equipment for MR WHITESIDE's broadcast*)

WHITESIDE Oh, come in, Westcott
. Beverly, it's superb The best
thing you've ever written It'll be
played by every ragtag orchestra
from Salem to Singapore

BEVERLY Please! Let me say that
Ah, the air waves, eh? Well, I
shan't have to hear you, thank God
I shall be on the train

MAGGIE Come on, Whiteside, say
good-bye Mr Westcott, he's still
four minutes over—you'll have to
chisel it out

WHITESIDE (*as MAGGIE starts to
wheel him into the library*) Stop this
nonsense Beverly, my lamb—

MAGGIE You can kiss Beverly in
London on July twelfth (*Then to
the technicians*) The microphone
set-up is right there, gentlemen, and
you can connect up outside John,
show them where it is

WHITESIDE Maggie, what the hell
are you—

BEVERLY (*calling after the fast-dis-
appearing WHITESIDE*) Au revoir,
Sherry Merry Christmas Magpie,
come get a kiss

MAGGIE (*emerging from the library
and closing the doors behind her*)
Beverly, I want one minute I must
have it You'll make the train The
station's a minute and a half from
here

BEVERLY Why, what's the matter,
Magpie?
(*At which the library doors are*

opened and the DOCTOR emerges, rather apologetically He is sped on his way by MR WHITESIDE's roaring voice—"Oh, get out of here!")

DR BRADLEY I'm—I'm just waiting in the kitchen until Mr Whiteside is— Excuse me *(He darts out through the dining room)*

BEVERLY Who is that man?

MAGGIE Never mind . . . Beverly, I'm in great trouble

BEVERLY. Why, Magpie dear, what's the matter?

MAGGIE I've fallen in love. For the first time in my life Beverly, I'm in love I can't tell you about it—there isn't time But Sherry is trying to break it up In his own fiendish way he's doing everything he can to break it up

BEVERLY Why, the old devil! What's he doing?

MAGGIE Lorraine He's brought Lorraine here to smash it

BEVERLY Oh, it's somebody *here?* In this town?

MAGGIE *(nodding)* He's a newspaperman—the one you're going to see at the station—and he's written a play, and I know Sherry must be using that as bait You know Lorraine—she'll eat him up alive You've got to help me, Beverly

BEVERLY Of course I will, Magpie What do you want me to do?

MAGGIE I've got to get Lorraine out of here—the farther away the better—and you can do it for me.

BEVERLY. But how? How can I? I'm leaving

(The library doors are opened and WESTCOTT, the radio man, emerges)

WESTCOTT Have you a carbon copy of the broadcast, Miss Cutler?

MAGGIE It's on that table

WESTCOTT Thank you One of those penguins ate the original *(The voice of WHITESIDE is now heard calling from his room)*

WHITESIDE Beverly, are you still there?

MAGGIE No, he's gone, Sherry *(She lowers her voice)* Come out here *(Maneuvering him into the hall, we see her whisper to him, his head bobs up and down quickly in assent Then he lets out a shriek of laughter)*

BEVERLY I'd love it I'd absolutely love it *(MAGGIE puts a quick finger to his lips, peers toward the WHITESIDE room But MR WESTCOTT has gone in, the doors are closed)* It's simply enchanting, and bitches Sherry and Lorraine at the same time It's pure heaven! I adore it, and I shall do it up brown *(He embraces her)*

MAGGIE Darling, the first baby will be named Beverly You're wonderful

BEVERLY Of course I am Come to Chislewick for your honeymoon and I'll put you up Good-bye, my lovely I adore you *(And he is gone MAGGIE comes back into the room, highly pleased with herself She even sings a fragment of BEVERLY's song "What am I to do? Tra-la-la-la-la")* JOHN, entering from the dining room, breaks the song)

JOHN Shall I straighten up the room for the broadcast, Miss Cutler?

LORRAINE Hello, dear Where's Sherry?

MAGGIE No, John, it isn't television, thank God. They only hear that liquid voice

MAGGIE Inside, working—he's broadcasting very soon

JOHN He's really wonderful, isn't he? The things he finds time to do

LORRAINE Oh, of course—Christmas Eve What a wonderful man Sheridan Whiteside is! You know, my dear, it must be such an utter joy to be secretary to somebody like Sherry

MAGGIE Yes, he certainly sticks his nose into everything, John *(She goes into the library JOHN is putting the room in order when suddenly JUNE comes quietly down the stairs She is dressed for the street and is carrying a suitcase)*

MAGGIE Yes, you meet such interesting people That's quite a gown, Lorraine Going anywhere?

JOHN Why, Miss June, are you going away?

LORRAINE This? Oh, I just threw on anything at all Aren't you dressing for dinner?

JUNE Why—no, John No I'm just—Mr Whiteside is inside, I suppose?

MAGGIE No, just what meets the eye *(She has occasion to carry a few papers across the room at this point LORRAINE's eye watches her narrowly)*

JUNE Oh! Well, look, John—*(And then RICHARD darts down the stairs A light bag, two cameras slung over his shoulder)*

LORRAINE Who does your hair, Maggie?

RICHARD *(to JUNE, in a heavy whisper)* Where's Mr Whiteside? In there?

MAGGIE A little French woman named Maggie Cutler comes in every morning

JUNE Yes, he is

LORRAINE You know, every time I see you I keep thinking your hair could be so lovely I always want to get my hands on it

RICHARD Oh! Well, maybe we ought to—*(The doorbell rings RICHARD and JUNE exchange looks, then scurry out quickly through the dining room JOHN looks after them for a second, puzzled, then goes to the door It is LORRAINE who comes in, resplendent now in evening dress and wrap, straight from Paris At the same time MAGGIE emerges from the library and JOHN goes on his way)*

MAGGIE *(quietly)* I've always wanted to get mine on yours, Lorraine

LORRAINE *(absently)*. What, dear? *(One of the radio men drifts into the room, plugs into the control board, drifts out again LORRAINE's eyes follow him idly Then she turns to MAGGIE again)* By the way, what

time does Beverly get here? I'm not over anxious to meet him

MAGGIE He's been and gone, Lorraine

LORRAINE Really? Well, I'm very glad Of course you're great friends, aren't you—you and Beverly?

MAGGIE Yes, we are I think he's a wonderful person

LORRAINE Oh, I suppose so But when I finished acting with him I was a perfect wreck All during that tender love scene that the critics thought was so magnificent he kept dropping peanut shells down my dress I wouldn't act with him again if I were starving

MAGGIE (casually) Tell me, Lorraine, have you found a new play yet?

LORRAINE (at once on guard) No No, I haven't There was a pile of manuscripts waiting in New York for me, but I hurried right out here to Sherry

MAGGIE Yes, it was wonderful of you, Lorraine—to drop everything that way and rush to Sherry's wheelchair

LORRAINE Well, after all, Maggie dear, what else has one in this world but friends? How long will Sherry be in there, I wonder?

MAGGIE Not long Did you know that Mr Jefferson has written quite a good play? The young man that drove you to the hotel

LORRAINE Really? No I didn't Isn't that interesting?

MAGGIE Yes, isn't it?
(There is a considerable pause The ladies smile at each other)

LORRAINE (evading MAGGIE's eyes) They've put a polish on my nails I simply loathe I don't suppose Elizabeth Arden has a branch in this town

MAGGIE (busy with her papers) Not if she has any sense

LORRAINE Oh, well, I'll just bear it, but it does depress me (She rises, wanders aimlessly for a moment, picks up a book from the table) Have you read this, Maggie? Everybody was reading it on the boat I hear you simply can't put it down

MAGGIE I put it down—right there (LORRAINE casually strikes a note or two on the piano The telephone rings)

MAGGIE (taking up the receiver a little too casually) Hello Yes Yes Miss Lorraine Sheldon? Yes, she's here There's a trans-Atlantic call coming through for you, Lorraine

LORRAINE Trans-Atlantic—for me? Here? Why, what in the world—

MAGGIE (as she hands over the receiver) It's London

LORRAINE London? Hello.
(Then in a louder tone) Hello Cedric! Cedric, is this you? Why, Cedric, you darling! Why, what a surprise! How'd you know I was here? Darling, don't talk so fast and you won't stutter so That's better Yes, now I can hear you Yes, very clearly It's as though you were just around the corner

I see What? Darling! Cedric, dearest, would you wait just one moment? *(She turns to MAGGIE)* Maggie, would you mind? It's Lord Bottomley—a very personal call Would you mind?

MAGGIE Oh, not at all *(She goes into the dining room, almost does a little waltz step as she goes)*

LORRAINE Yes, my dearest—now tell me Cedric, please don't stutter so Don't be nervous *(She listens for a moment again)* Oh, my darling Oh, my sweet You don't know how I've prayed for this, every night on the boat Darling, yes! YES, a thousand times Yes! I'll take a plane right out of here and catch the next boat Oh, my sweet, we're going to be the happiest people in the world I wish I were there now in your arms, Cedric What? Cedric, don't stutter so Yes, and I love you, my darling—oh, so much!

Oh, my dear sweet My darling, my darling Yes, yes! I will, I will, darling! I'll be thinking of you every moment You've made me the happiest girl in the world Good-bye, good-bye, darling Good-bye *(Bursting with her news, she throws open the library doors)* Sherry, Sherry! Do you know what's happened? Cedric just called from London— He's asked me to marry him Sherry, think of it! At last! I've got to get right out of here and catch the next boat How far are we from Chicago? I can get a plane from there

MAGGIE *(emerging, mouse-like, from the dining room)* May I come in?

LORRAINE Maggie dear, can I get a plane out of here right away? Or I'll even take a train to Chicago and fly

from there I've simply got to get the next boat for England When is it—do you know? Is there a newspaper here?

MAGGIE The *Queen Mary* sails Friday Why, what's all the excitement? Lorraine? What's happened?

LORRAINE Maggie, the most wonderful thing in the world has happened Lord Bottomley has asked me to marry him Oh, Maggie! *(And in her exuberance she throws her arms around her)*

MAGGIE Really? Well, what do you know?

LORRAINE Isn't it wonderful? I'm so excited I can hardly think Maggie dear, you must help me get out of here

MAGGIE I'd be delighted to, Lorraine

LORRAINE Oh, thank you, thank you Will you look things up right away?

MAGGIE Yes, I've a time-table right here And don't worry, because if there's no train I'll drive you to Toledo and you can catch the plane from there

LORRAINE Maggie darling, you're wonderful Sherry, what's the matter with you? You haven't said a word You haven't even congratulated me

WHITESIDE *(who has been sitting through this like a thundercloud)* Let me understand this, Lorraine Am I to gather from your girlish squeals that you are about to toss your career into the ashcan?

LORRAINE Oh, not at all Of course I may not be able to play this season, but there'll be other seasons, Sherry

WHITESIDE I see And everything goes into the ashcan with it— Is that right?

LORRAINE But, Sherry, you couldn't expect me to—

WHITESIDE (*icily*) Don't explain, Lorraine I understand only too well And I also understand why Cornell remains the First Actress of our theatre

MAGGIE (*busy with her time-tables*) Oh, this is wonderful! We're in luck, Lorraine You can get a plane out of Toledo at ten-three It takes about an hour to get there Why, it all works out wonderfully, doesn't it, Sherry?

WHITESIDE (*through his teeth*) Peachy!

LORRAINE (*heading for the phone*) Maggie, what's the number of that hotel I'm at? I've got to get my maid started packing

MAGGIE Mesalia three two

LORRAINE (*into the phone*) Mesalia three two, please Let's see—I sail Friday, five-day boat, that means I ought to be in London Wednesday night Hello This is Miss Sheldon That's right Connect me with my maid

MAGGIE (*at the window*) Oh, look, Sherry, it's starting to snow Isn't that wonderful, Sherry? Oh, I never felt more like Christmas in my life. Don't you, Sherry dear?

WHITESIDE Shut your nasty little face!

LORRAINE (*on the phone*) Cosette?

Now listen carefully, Cosette, Have you got a pencil? We're leaving here tonight by plane and sailing Friday on the *Queen Mary* Start packing immediately and I'll call for you in about an hour Yes, that's right Now I want you to send these cables for me Ready?

The first one goes to Lord and Lady Cunard—you'll find all these addresses in my little book It's in my dressing case "Lord and Lady Cunard My darlings Returning Friday *Queen Mary* Cedric and I being married immediately on arrival Wanted you to be the first to know Love—Lorraine" Now send the same message—what? Oh, thank you, Cosette Thank you very much

Send the same message to Lady Astor, Lord Beaverbrook, and the Duchess of Sutherland Got that?

And send a cable to Molyneaux, in Paris "Please meet me Claridge's Thursday of next week with sketches of bridal gown and trousseau—Lorraine Sheldon" And then send one to Monsieur Pierre Cartier, Cartier's, Paris "Can you bring over to London the triple string of pearls I picked out in October? Cable me *Queen Mary*—Lorraine Sheldon"

Have you got all that straight, Cosette? That's fine Now you'll have to rush, my dear—I'll be at the hotel in about an hour, so be ready

Good-bye (*She hangs up*) Thank goodness for Cosette—I'd die without her She's the most wonderful maid in the world Well! Life is really just full of surprises, isn't it? Who'd have thought an hour ago that I'd be on my way to London?

MAGGIE *An hour ago?* No, I certainly wouldn't have thought it an hour ago

WHITESIDE *(beside himself with temper)* Will you both stop this female drooling? I have a violent headache

MAGGIE *(all solicitude)* Oh, Sherry! Can I get you something?

LORRAINE Look here, Sherry, I'm sorry if I've offended you, but after all my life is my own and I'm not going to— *(She stops as BERT JEFFERSON comes in from the outside)*

BERT Hello, everybody Say, do you know it's snowing out? Going to have a real old-fashioned Christmas

WHITESIDE Why don't you telephone your scoop to the New York Times?

MAGGIE Bert, Miss Sheldon has to catch a plane tonight, from Toledo Can we drive her over, you and I?

BERT Why, certainly Sorry you have to go, Miss Sheldon No bad news, I hope?

LORRAINE Oh, on the contrary—very good news. Wonderful news

MAGGIE Yes, indeed—calls for a drink, I think You're not being a very good host, Sherry How about a bottle of champagne?

BERT Oh, I can do better than that—let me mix you something It's a Jefferson Special Okay, Mr Whiteside?

WHITESIDE Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes Mix anything Only stop driveling.

BERT *(on his way to the dining room)* Anybody admired my Christmas present yet, Maggie?

MAGGIE Oh, dear, I forgot *(She raises her arm, revealing a bracelet)* Look, everybody! From Mr Jefferson to me

LORRAINE Oh, it's charming Let me see it Oh! Why, it's inscribed, too. "To Maggie Long may she wave Bert" Maggie, it's a lovely Christmas present Isn't it sweet, Sherry?

WHITESIDE *(glowering)* Ducky!

MAGGIE I told you it was beautiful, Bert See?

BERT Well, shows what you get if you save your coupons

LORRAINE *(looking from BERT to MAGGIE)* Well, what's going on between you two, anyhow? Maggie, are you hiding something from us?

WHITESIDE *(a hand to his head)* Great God, will this drivél never stop? My head is bursting

BERT A Jefferson Special will cure anything By the way, I got a two-minute interview with Beverly Carlton at the station You were right, Mr Whiteside— He's quite something

MAGGIE *(uneasily)* Go ahead, Bert—mix the drinks

BERT I was lucky to get even two minutes He was in a telephone booth most of the time Couldn't hear what he was saying, but from the faces he was making it looked like a scene from one of his plays.

MAGGIE (*hiding her frenzy*) Bert, mix those drinks, will you?

WHITESIDE (*suddenly galvanized*) Just a minute, if you please, Jefferson Mr Carlton was in a telephone booth at the station?

BERT Certainly was—I thought he'd never come out Kept talking and making the damndest faces for about five minutes

MAGGIE (*tensely*) Bert, for goodness sake, will you—

WHITESIDE (*ever so sweetly*) Bert, my boy, I have an idea I shall love the Jefferson Special Make me a double one, will you? My headache has gone with the wind

BERT Okay (*He goes WHITESIDE, his eyes gleaming, immediately whisks his wheelchair across the room to the telephone*)

WHITESIDE (*a finger to his lips*) Sssh! Philo Vance is now at work

LORRAINE What?

WHITESIDE Sssh! (*He picks up the telephone His voice is absolutely musical*) Operator! Has there been a call from England over this telephone within the past half hour? Yes, I'll wait

LORRAINE Sherry, what is all this?

WHITESIDE What's that? There have been no calls from England for the past three days? Thank you Now, will you repeat that, please?

Blossom Girl (*He beckons to LORRAINE, then puts the receiver to her ear*) Hear it, dear? (*Then again to the operator*) Thank you and a

Merry Christmas (*He hangs up*) Yes, indeed, it seems we're going to have a real old-fashioned Christmas

LORRAINE (*stunned*) Sherry, what is all this? What's going on? What does this mean?

WHITESIDE My dear, you have just played the greatest love scene of your career with your old friend, Beverly Carlton

LORRAINE Why—why, that's not true I was talking to Cedric What do you mean?

WHITESIDE I mean, my blossom, that that was Beverly you poured out your girlish heart to, not Lord Bottomley Ah, me, who'd have thought five minutes ago that you would not be going to London!

LORRAINE Sherry, stop it! What is this? I want this explained

WHITESIDE Explained? You heard the operator, my dear Ali I can tell you is that Beverly was indulging in one of his famous bits of mimicry, that's all You've heard him do Lord Bottomley before, haven't you?

LORRAINE (*as it dawns on her*) Yes Yes, of course But—but why would he want to do such a thing? This is one of the most dreadful—oh, my God! Those cables! (*In one bound she is at the telephone*) Give me the hotel—whatever it's called—I want the hotel—I'll pay him off for this if it's the last thing that I— Why, the cad! The absolute unutterable cad! The dirty rotten—Mansion House? Connect me with my maid What? Who the hell do you think it is? Miss Sheldon, of course Oh, God! Those cables! If only

Cosette hasn't—Cosette! Cosette! Did you send those cables? . . . Oh, God! Oh, God . . . Now listen, Cosette! I want you to send another cable to every one of those people, and tell them somebody has been using my name, and to disregard anything and everything they hear from me—except this, of course . . . Don't ask questions—do as you're told . . . Don't argue with me, you French bitch—God damn it, do as you're told . . . And unpack—we're not going! (She hangs up)

WHITESIDE Now steady, my blossom . . . Take it easy

LORRAINE (in a white rage) What do you mean take it easy? Do you realize I'll be the laughingstock of England? Why, I won't dare show my face! I always knew Beverly Carlton was low, but not this low . . . Why? WHY? It isn't even funny . . . Why would he do it, that's what I'd like to know . . . Why would he do it? Why would anyone in the world want to play a silly trick like this? I can't understand it . . . Do you, Sherry? Do you, Maggie? You both saw him this afternoon . . . Why would he walk out of here, go right to a phone booth, and try to ship me over to England on a fool's errand? There must have been some reason—there must have . . . It doesn't make sense otherwise . . . Why would Beverly Carlton, or anybody else for that matter, want me to—(She stops as a dim light begins to dawn) Oh! Oh! (Her eye, which has been on MAGGIE, goes momentarily to the dining room, where BERT has disappeared . . . Then her gaze returns to MAGGIE again) I—I think I begin to—of course! Of course! That's it . . . Of course that's it . . . Yes, and that's a very charming bracelet that Mr Jefferson gave you—isn't it, Maggie dear? Of

course . . . It makes complete sense now . . . And to think that I nearly—well! Wild horses couldn't get me out of here now, Maggie . . . And if I were you I'd hang onto that bracelet, dear . . . It'll be something to remember him by! (Out of the library comes MR WESTCOTT, his hands full of papers . . . At the same time the two technicians emerge from the dining room and go to the control board)

WESTCOTT (his eyes on his watch) All right, Mr Whiteside . . . Almost time . . . Here's your new copy . . . Hook her up, boys . . . Start testing

WHITESIDE How much time?

WESTCOTT (bringing him a microphone) Couple of minutes . . . (One of the radio technicians is talking into a microphone, testing "One two, three, four, one, two, three, four . . . How are we coming in, New York? A, B, C, A, B, C . . . Mary had a little lamb, Mary had a little lamb" . . . MR and MRS STANLEY, having delivered their Christmas presents, enter from the hallway and start up the stairs . . . MRS STANLEY looks hungrily at the radio goings-on, but MR STANLEY delivers a stern "Come, Daisy," and she follows him up the stairs . . . The voices of the technicians drone on "One, two, three, four, one, two, three, four . . . O K, New York . . . Waiting" . . . MR WESTCOTT stands with watch in hand . . . From the dining room comes BERT JEFFERSON, a tray of drinks in hand)

BERT Here comes the Jefferson Special . . . Oh! Have we time?

LORRAINE Oh, I'm sure we have . . . Mr Jefferson, I'm not leaving after all . . . My plans are changed

BERT Really? Oh, that's good.

LORRAINE And I hear you've written a simply marvelous play, Mr Jefferson. I want you to read it to me—tonight. Will you? We'll go back to the Mansion House right after dinner, and you'll read me your play

BERT Why—why, I should say so. I'd be delighted. Maggie, did you hear that? Say! I'll bet you did this. You arranged the whole thing. Well, it's the finest Christmas present you could have given me.

(MAGGIE looks at him for one anguished moment. Then, without a word, she dashes into the hall, grabs her coat and flings herself out of the house. BERT, bewildered, stands looking after her. MR and MRS STANLEY come pellmell down the stairs. Each clutches a letter, and they are wild-eyed.)

STANLEY Mr Whiteside! My son has run off on a freighter and my daughter is marrying an anarchist! They say you told them to do it!

MRS STANLEY My poor June! My poor Richard! This is the most awful—

WESTCOTT Quiet! Quiet, please! We're going on the air.

STANLEY How dare you! This is the most outrageous—

WESTCOTT (raising his voice) Please! Please! Quiet! We're going on the air.

(STANLEY chokes and looks with fury. MRS STANLEY is softly crying. In this moment of stillness, DR BRADLEY emerges from the dining room.)

DR BRADLEY Oh! I see you're still busy.

STANLEY (bursting forth) Mr Whiteside, you are the—

WESTCOTT (yelling) Quiet! For God's sake, quiet! QUIET! All right, boys! (From the hallway come six CHOIR BOYS, dressed in their robes. They take their places by the microphone as the voice of the technician completes the hook-up.)

TECHNICIAN O K, New York. (He raises his arm, waiting to give the signal. WESTCOTT is watching him. There is a dead pause of about five seconds. JOHN and SARAH are on tiptoe in the dining room. Then the arm drops.)

WESTCOTT (into the microphone) Good evening, everybody. Cream of Mush brings you Shendan Whiteside. (The LEADER gestures to the CHOIR BOYS, and they raise their lovely voices in "Heilige Nacht." Another gesture from WESTCOTT, and WHITESIDE begins to speak, with the boys singing as a background.)

WHITESIDE This is Whiteside speaking. On this eve of eves, when my own heart is overflowing with peace and kindness, I think it is most fitting to tell once again the story of that still and lustrous night, nigh onto two thousand years ago, when first the star of Bethlehem was glimpsed in a wondrous sky. (The famous WHITESIDE voice goes out over the air to the listening millions as the curtain falls.)

ACT THREE

Christmas morning

The bright December sunlight streams in through the window

But the Christmas calm is quickly broken From the library comes the roaring voice of MR WHITESIDE "Miss Preen! Miss Preen!"

MISS PREEN, who is just coming through the dining room, rushes to open the library doors

MISS PREEN (*nervously*) Yes, sir
Yes, sir

(MR WHITESIDE, in a mood, rolls himself into the room)

WHITESIDE Where do you disappear to all the time, My Lady Nausea?

MISS PREEN (*firmly*) Mr Whiteside, I can only be in one place at a time

WHITESIDE That's very fortunate for this community Go away, Miss Preen You remind me of last week's laundry

(MISS PREEN goes indignantly into the library and slams the doors after her JOHN emerges from the dining room)

JOHN Good morning, Mr Whiteside
Merry Christmas

WHITESIDE (*testily*) Merry Christmas, John Merry Christmas

JOHN And Sarah and I want to thank you for the wonderful present

WHITESIDE. That's quite all right, John

JOHN. Are you ready for your breakfast, Mr Whiteside?

WHITESIDE No, I don't think I want any breakfast Has Miss Cutler come down yet?

JOHN. No, sir, not yet

WHITESIDE Is she in her room, do you know?

JOHN Yes, sir, I think she is Shall I call her?

WHITESIDE No, no That's all, John.

JOHN Yes, sir.

(MAGGIE comes down the stairs She wears a traveling suit, and carries a bag WHITESIDE waits for her to speak)

MAGGIE I'm taking the one o'clock train, Sherry I'm leaving

WHITESIDE You're doing nothing of the kind!

MAGGIE Here are your keys—your driving license The key to the safe-deposit vault is in the apartment in New York I'll go in here now and

clear things up (*She opens the library doors*)

WHITESIDE Just a moment, Mrs Siddons! Where were you until three o'clock this morning? I sat up half the night in this station wagon, worrying about you. You heard me calling to you when you came in. Why didn't you answer me?

MAGGIE Look, Sherry, it's over, and you've won. I don't want to talk about it.

WHITESIDE Oh, come, come, come, come, come. What are you trying to do—make me feel like a naughty, naughty boy? Honestly, Maggie, sometimes you can be very annoying.

MAGGIE (*looking at him in wonder*) You know, you're quite wonderful, Sherry, in a way. You're annoyed. I wish there was a laugh left in me. Shall I tell you something, Sherry? I think you are a selfish, petty egomaniac who would see his mother burned at the stake if that was the only way he could light his cigarette. I think you'd sacrifice your best friend without a moment's hesitation if he disturbed the sacred routine of your self-centered, paltry little life. I think you are incapable of any human emotion that goes higher up than your stomach, and I was the fool of the world for ever thinking I could trust you.

WHITESIDE (*pretty indignant at this*) Well, as long as I live, I shall never do anyone a good turn again. I won't ask you to apologize, Maggie, but six months from now you will be thanking me instead of berating me.

MAGGIE In six months, Sherry, I expect to be so far away from you—

(*She is halted by a loud voice from the hallway, as the door bangs "Hello—hello—hello!" It is BERT JEFFERSON who enters, full of Christmas cheer*)

BERT Merry Christmas, everybody! Merry Christmas! I'm a little high, but I can explain everything. Hi, Maggie! Hi, Mr Whiteside! Shake hands with a successful playwright, Maggie, why'd you run away last night? Where were you? Miss Sheldon thinks the play is wonderful. I read her the play and she thinks it's wonderful. Isn't that wonderful?

MAGGIE Yes, that's fine, Bert.

BERT Isn't that wonderful, Mr Whiteside?

WHITESIDE Jefferson, I think you ought to go home, don't you?

BERT What? No—biggest day of my life. I know I'm a little drunk, but this is a big day. We've been sitting over in Billy's Tavern all night. Never realized it was daylight until it was daylight. Listen, Maggie—Miss Sheldon says the play needs just a little bit of fixing—do it in three weeks. She's going to take me to a little place she's got in Lake Placid—just for three weeks. Going to work on the play together. Isn't it wonderful? Why don't you say something, Maggie?

WHITESIDE Look, Bert, I suggest you tell us all about this later. Now, why don't you— (*He stops as DR BRADLEY enters from the hallway*)

DR BRADLEY Oh, excuse me! Merry Christmas, everybody. Merry Christmas.

BERT God bless us all, and Tiny Tim

HARRIET *comes down the steps, dressed for the street*)

DR BRADLEY Yes Mr Whiteside, I thought perhaps if I came very early—

HARRIET Merry Christmas, Mr Whiteside

BERT You know what, Doc? I'm going to Lake Placid for three weeks—isn't that wonderful? Ever hear of Lorraine Sheldon, the famous actress? Well, we're going to Lake Placid for three weeks

WHITESIDE Oh! Merry Christmas, Miss Stanley

HARRIET (*nervously*) I'm afraid I shouldn't be seen talking to you, Mr. Whiteside—my brother is terribly angry I just couldn't resist asking—did you like my Christmas present?

WHITESIDE Dr Bradley, would you do me a favor? I think Mr Jefferson would like some black coffee and a little breakfast Would you take care of him, please?

WHITESIDE I'm very sorry, Miss Stanley—I haven't opened it I haven't opened any of my presents yet

DR BRADLEY (*none too pleased*) Yes, yes, of course

HARRIET Oh, dear I was so anxious to—it's right here, Mr Whiteside (*She goes to the tree*) Won't you open it now?

BERT Dr Bradley, I'm going to buy breakfast for you—biggest breakfast you ever had

WHITESIDE (*as he undoes the string*) I appreciate your thinking of me, Miss Stanley This is very thoughtful of you (*He takes out the gift*) Why, it's lovely I'm very fond of these old photographs Thank you very much

DR BRADLEY Yes, yes Come along, Jefferson

HARRIET I was twenty-two when that was taken That was my favorite dress Do you really like it?

BERT You know what, Doctor? Let's climb down a couple of chimneys I got a friend doesn't believe in Santa Claus—let's climb down his chimney and frighten the hell out of him (*He goes out with the DOCTOR*)

WHITESIDE I do indeed When I get back to town I shall send you a little gift

WHITESIDE (*in a burst of magnanimity*) Now listen to me, Maggie I am willing to forgive your tawdry outburst and talk about this calmly

HARRIET Will you? Oh, thank you. Mr Whiteside I shall treasure it.

Well, I shall be late for church. Good-bye Good-bye

MAGGIE (*now crying openly*) I love him so terribly Oh, Sherry, Sherry, why did you do it? Why did you do it? (*She goes stumblingly into the library WHITESIDE, left alone, looks at his watch, heaves a long sigh. Then*

WHITESIDE Good-bye, Miss Stanley. (*As she goes out the front door, WHITESIDE'S eyes return to the gift.*

He puzzles over it for a second, shakes his head Mumbles to himself—"What is there about that woman?" Shakes his head again in perplexity. JOHN comes from the dining room, en route to the second floor with MRS STANLEY's tray)

JOHN Sarah's got a little surprise for you, Mr Whiteside She's just taking it out of the oven

WHITESIDE Thank you, John (JOHN disappears up the stairs Then suddenly there is a great ringing of the doorbell It stops for a second, then picks up violently again—rhythmically, this time It continues until the door is opened)

WHITESIDE Miss Preen! Miss Preen! (MISS PREEN comes hurrying from the library)

MISS PREEN Yes, sir Yes, sir

WHITESIDE Answer the door, will you? John is upstairs (MISS PREEN, obviously annoyed, hurries to the door We hear her voice from the hallway "Who is it?" An answering male voice "Polly Adler's?" Then a little shriek from MISS PREEN, and in a moment we see the reason why She is carried into the room in the arms of a pixie-like gentleman, who is kissing her over and over)

THE GENTLEMAN CARRYING MISS PREEN I love you madly—madly! Did you hear what I said—madly! Kiss me! Again! Don't be afraid of my passion Kiss me! I can feel the hot blood pounding through your varicose veins.

MISS PREEN (through all this) Put me down! Put me down, do you hear?

Don't you dare kiss me! Who are you? Put me down or I'll scream Mr Whiteside! Mr Whiteside!

WHITESIDE Banjo! Banjo, for God's sake!

BANJO (quite calmly) Hello, Whiteside Will you sign for this package, please?

WHITESIDE Banjo, put that woman down That is my nurse, you mental delinquent

BANJO (putting MISS PREEN on her feet) Come to my room in half an hour and bring some rye bread (And for good measure he slaps MISS PREEN right on the fanny)

MISS PREEN (outraged) Really, Mr Whiteside! (She adjusts her clothes with a quick jerk or two and marches into the library)

BANJO Whiteside, I'm here to spend Christmas with you Give me a kiss! (He starts to embrace him)

WHITESIDE Get away from me, you reform-school fugitive How did you get here anyway?

BANJO Darryl Zanuck loaned me his reindeer Whiteside, we finished shooting the picture yesterday and I'm on my way to Nova Scotia Flew here in twelve hours—borrowed an airplane from Howard Hughes Whiteside, I brought you a wonderful Christmas present (He produces a little tissue-wrapped package) This brassière was once worn by Hedy Lamarr.

WHITESIDE Listen, you idiot, how long can you stay?

BANJO Just long enough to take a bath I'm on my way to Nova Scotia Where's Maggie?

WHITESIDE Nova Scotia? What are you going to Nova Scotia for?

BANJO I'm sick of Hollywood and there's a dame in New York I don't want to see So I figured I'd go to Nova Scotia and get some good salmon Where the hell's Maggie? I want to see her What's the matter with you? Where is she?

WHITESIDE Banjo, I'm glad you're here I'm very annoyed at Maggie Very!

BANJO What's the matter? (To his considerable surprise, at this point, he sees WHITESIDE get up out of his chair and start to pace up and down the room.) Say, what is this? I thought you couldn't walk

WHITESIDE Oh, I've been all right for weeks That isn't the point I'm furious at Maggie She's turned on me like a viper You know how fond I am of her Well, after all these years she's repaying my affection by behaving like a fish-wife

BANJO What are you talking about?

WHITESIDE But I never believed for a moment she was really in love with him

BANJO In love with who? I just got here—remember.

WHITESIDE Great God, I'm telling you, you Hollywood nitwit A young newspaperman here in town

BANJO (surprised and pleased) Maggie finally fell—well, what do you know? What kind of a guy is he?

WHITESIDE. Oh, shut up and listen, will you?

BANJO. Well, go on What happened?

WHITESIDE Well, Lorraine Sheldon happened to come out here and visit me

BANJO Old Hot-pants—here?

WHITESIDE Now listen! He'd written a play—this young fellow You can guess the rest He's going away with Lorraine this afternoon To "re-write" So there you are Maggie's in there now, crying her eyes out

BANJO. Gee! . (Thinking it over) Say, wait a minute What do you mean Lorraine Sheldon happened to come out here? I smell a rat, Sherry—a rat with a beard (And it might be well to add, at this point, that MR SHERIDAN WHITESIDE wears a beard)

WHITESIDE Well, all right, all right But I did it for Maggie—because I thought it was the right thing for her

BANJO Oh, sure You haven't thought of yourself in years Gee, poor kid. Can I go in and talk to her?

WHITESIDE No—no Leave her alone

BANJO Any way I could help, Sherry? Where's this guy live—this guy she likes? Can we get hold of him?

WHITESIDE Now, wait a minute, Banjo. We don't want any phony warrants, or you pretending to be J. Edgar Hoover I've been through all that with you before (He paces again) I got Lorraine out here and I've got to get her away.

BANJO It's got to be good, Sherry Lorraine's no dope . Now, there must be something that would get her out of here like a bat out of hell

Say! I think I've got it! That fellow she's so crazy about over in England—Lord Fanny or whatever it is Bottomley—that's it!

WHITESIDE (*with pained expression*) No, Banjo No

BANJO Wait a minute—you don't catch on We send Lorraine a cablegram from Lord Bottomley—

WHITESIDE I catch on, Banjo Lorraine caught on, too It's been tried

BANJO Oh! I told you she was no dope (*Seeing WHITESIDE's chair, he sits in it and leans back with a good deal of pleasure*) Well, you've got a tough proposition on your hands

WHITESIDE The trouble is there's so damned little time Get out of my chair! (*WHITESIDE gets back into it*) Lorraine's taking him away with her this afternoon Oh, damn, damn, damn There must be some way out The trouble is I've done this job too well Hell and damnation

BANJO (*pacing*) Stuck, huh?

WHITESIDE In the words of one of our greatest lyric poets, you said it

BANJO Yeh Gee, I'm hungry We'll think of something, Sherry—you watch We'll get Lorraine out of here if I have to do it one piece at a time

(*SARAH enters from the dining room bearing a tray on which reposes the culinary surprise that JOHN has mentioned She holds it behind her back*)

SARAH Merry Christmas, Mr. Whiteside Excuse me (*This last is to BANJO*) I've got something for you

(*BANJO blandly lifts the latest delicacy and proceeds to eat it as SARAH presents the empty plate to WHITE SIDE*)

SARAH (*almost in tears*) But, Mr Whiteside, it was for you

WHITESIDE Never mind, Sarah He's quite mad

BANJO Come, Petrouchka, we will dance in the snow until all St Petersburg is aflame with jealousy (*He clutches SARAH and waltzes her toward the kitchen, loudly humming the Merry Widow waltz*)

SARAH (*as she is borne away*) Mr Whiteside! Mr Whiteside!

WHITESIDE Just give him some breakfast, Sarah He's harmless (*MR WHITESIDE barely has a moment in which to collect his thoughts before the library doors are opened and MISS PREEN emerges It is MISS PREEN in street clothes this time, and with a suitcase in her hand She plants herself squarely in front of WHITESIDE, puts down her bag and starts drawing on a pair of gloves*)

WHITESIDE And just what does this mean?

MISS PREEN It means, Mr Whiteside, that I am leaving My address is on the desk inside, you can send me a check

WHITESIDE You realize, Miss Preen, that this is completely unprofessional

MISS PREEN I do indeed I am not only walking out on this case, Mr

Whiteside—I am leaving the nursing profession I became a nurse because all my life, ever since I was a little girl, I was filled with the idea of serving a suffering humanity After one month with you, Mr Whiteside, I am going to work in a munitions factory From now on anything that I can do to help exterminate the human race will fill me with the greatest of pleasure If Florence Nightingale had ever nursed you, Mr Whiteside, she would have married Jack the Ripper instead of founding the Red Cross Good day (*And she sails out*)

(*Before WHITESIDE has time to digest this little bouquet, MRS STANLEY, in a state of great fluttery excitement, rushes down the stairs*)

MRS STANLEY Mr Stanley is here with June He's brought June back Thank goodness, thank goodness (*We hear her at the door*) June, June, thank God you're back You're not married, are you?

JUNE (*from the hallway*) No, Mother, I'm not And please don't be hysterical

(*MRS STANLEY comes into view, her arms around a rebellious JUNE Behind them looms MR STANLEY, every inch the stern father*)

MRS STANLEY Oh, June, if it had been anyone but that awful boy You know how your father and I felt

Ernest, thank goodness you stopped it How did you do it?

STANLEY Never mind that, Daisy Just take June upstairs I have something to say to Mr Whiteside

MRS STANLEY What about Richard? Is there any news?

STANLEY. It's all right, Daisy—all under control Just take June upstairs.

JUNE Father, haven't we had enough melodrama? I don't have to be taken upstairs—I'll go upstairs Merry Christmas, Mr Whiteside It looks bad for John L Lewis Come on, Mother—lock me in my room

MRS STANLEY Now, June, you'll feel much better after you've had a hot bath, I know Have you had anything to eat? (*She follows her daughter up the stairs STANLEY turns to MR WHITESIDE*)

STANLEY I am pleased to inform you, sir, that your plans for my daughter seem to have gone a trifle awry She is not, nor will she ever be, married to that labor agitator that you so kindly picked out for her As for my son, he has been apprehended in Toledo, and will be brought back home within the hour Not having your gift for invective, I cannot tell you what I think of your obnoxious interference in my affairs, but I have now arranged that you will interfere no longer (*He turns toward the hallway*) Come in, gentlemen (*Two burly MEN come into view and stand in the archway*) Mr Whiteside, these gentlemen are deputy sheriffs They have a warrant by which I am enabled to put you out of this house, and I need hardly add that it will be the greatest moment of my life Mr Whiteside—(*He looks at his watch*) I am giving you fifteen minutes in which to pack up and get out If you are not gone in fifteen minutes, Mr Whiteside, these gentlemen will forcibly eject you (*He turns to the deputies*) Thank you, gentlemen Will you wait outside, please? (*The two MEN file out*) Fifteen minutes, Mr.

Whiteside—and that means bag, baggage, wheelchair, penguins, octopus and cockroaches I am now going upstairs to smash our radio, so that not even accidentally will I ever hear your voice again

WHITESIDE Sure you don't want my autograph, old fellow?

STANLEY Fifteen minutes, Mr Whiteside (*And he goes* BANJO, still eating, returns from the kitchen)

BANJO Well, Whiteside, I didn't get an idea Any news from the front?

WHITESIDE Yes The enemy is at my rear, and rubbing

BANJO Where'd you say Maggie was? In there?

WHITESIDE It's no use, Banjo She's taking the one o'clock train out

BANJO No kidding? You didn't tell me that You mean she's quitting you, after all these years? She's really leaving?

WHITESIDE She is!

BANJO That means you've only got till one o'clock to do something?

WHITESIDE No, dear I have exactly fifteen minutes— (*He looks at his watch*) ah—fourteen minutes—in which to pull out of my hat the God-damnedest rabbit you have ever seen

BANJO What do you mean fifteen minutes?

WHITESIDE In exactly fifteen minutes Baby's rosy little body is being tossed into the snow My host has sworn out a warrant I am being kicked out

BANJO. What? I never heard of such a thing What would he do a thing like that for?

WHITESIDE Never mind, never mind The point is, I have only fifteen minutes Banjo dear, the master is growing a little desperate

BANJO (*paces a moment*) What about laying your cards on the table with Lorraine?

WHITESIDE Now, Banjo You know Dream Girl as well as I do What do you think?

BANJO You're right Say! If I knew where she was I could get a car and run her over It wouldn't hurt her much

WHITESIDE (*wearily*) Banjo, for God's sake Go in and talk to Maggie for a minute—right in there I want to think

BANJO Could we get a doctor to say Lorraine has smallpox?

WHITESIDE Please, Banjo I've got to think

BANJO (*opening the library doors*) Pardon me, miss, is this the Y M C A?

(*The doors close WHITESIDE is alone again He leans back, concentrating intensely He shakes his head as, one after another, he discards a couple of ideas We hear the outer door open and close, and from the hallway comes RICHARD Immediately behind him is a stalwart-looking MAN with an air of authority*)

THE MAN (*to RICHARD, as he indicates WHITESIDE*) Is this your father?

RICHARD No, you idiot. . . Hello, Mr Whiteside. I didn't get very far Any suggestions?

WHITESIDE I'm very sorry, Richard—very sorry indeed I wish I were in position—

STANLEY (*descending the stairs*) Well, you're not in position 'Thank you very much, officer Here's a little something for your trouble

THE MAN Thank you, sir Good day (*He goes*)

STANLEY Will you go upstairs please, Richard?

(**RICHARD** *hesitates for a second Looks at his father, then at WHITESIDE, silently goes up the steps MR STANLEY follows him, but pauses on the landing*)

STANLEY Ten minutes, Mr Whiteside (*And he goes JOHN enters from the dining room, bringing a glass of orange juice*)

JOHN Here you are, Mr Whiteside Feeling any better?

WHITESIDE Superb Any cyanide in this orange juice, John? (*The door-bell rings*) Open the door, John It's probably some mustard gas from an old friend

JOHN (*en route to the door*) Yes, sir . . . Say, that crazy fellow made a great hit with Sarah He wants to give her a screen test

(*At the outer door we hear LORRAINE's voice "Good morning! Is Mr Whiteside up yet?" JOHN's answer "Yes, he is, Miss Sheldon—he's right here" WHITESIDE groans as he hears her voice*)

LORRAINE (*entering, in a very smart Christmas morning costume*) Merry Christmas, darling! Merry Christmas! I've come to have Christmas breakfast with you, my dear May I? (*She kisses him*)

WHITESIDE (*nothing matters any more*) Of course, my sprite John, a tray for Miss Sheldon—better make it one-minute eggs

LORRAINE Sherry, it's the most perfect Christmas morning—the snow is absolutely glistening Too bad you can't get out

WHITESIDE Oh, I'll probably see a bit of it I hear you're off for Lake Placid, my blossom What time are you going?

LORRAINE Oh, Sherry, how did you know? Is Bert here?

WHITESIDE No, he rolled in a little while ago Worked rather fast, didn't you, dear?

LORRAINE Darling, I was just swept off my feet by the play—it's fantastically good Sherry, it's the kind of part that only comes along once in ten years I'm so grateful to you, darling Really, Sherry, sometimes I think that you're the only friend I have in the world

WHITESIDE (*dryly*) Thank you, dear What time did you say you were leaving—you and Jefferson?

LORRAINE Oh, I don't know—I think it's four o'clock You know, quite apart from anything else, Sherry, Bert is really a very attractive man It makes it rather a pleasure, squaring accounts with little Miss Vitriol In fact, it's all worked out beautifully,

Sherry lamb, I want to give you the most beautiful Christmas present you've ever had in your life Now, what do you want? Anything! I'm so deliriously happy that— (*A bel-lowing laugh comes from the library She stops, lips compressed*) That sounds like Banjo Is he here?

WHITESIDE He is, my dear Just the family circle gathering at Christmas (*A look at his watch*) My, how time flies when you're having fun (*BANJO emerges from the library*)

BANJO Why, hello, Sweetie Pants! How are you?

LORRAINE (*not over-cordial*) Very well, thank you And you, Banjo?

BANJO I'm fine, fine How's the mat-tress business, Lorraine?

LORRAINE Very funny It's too bad, Banjo, that your pictures aren't as funny as you seem to think you are

BANJO You've got me there, mama Say, you look in the pink, Lorraine Anything in the wind, Whiteside?

WHITESIDE Not a glimmer

BANJO What time does the boat sail?

WHITESIDE Ten minutes

LORRAINE What boat is this?

BANJO The good ship *Up the Creek* Oh, well! You feel fine, huh, Lorraine?

LORRAINE What? Yes, of course I do Where's that breakfast, Sherry? (*MAGGIE emerges from the library, a sheaf of papers in her hand She*

stops imperceptibly as she sees LORRAINE)

MAGGIE I've listed everything except the New Year's Eve broadcast Wasn't there a schedule on that?

WHITESIDE (*uneasily*) I think it's on the table there, some place

MAGGIE Thank you (*She turns to the papers on the table*)

LORRAINE (*obviously for MAGGIE's ears*) New Year's Eve? Oh, Bert and I'll hear it in Lake Placid You were at my cottage up there once, weren't you, Sherry? It's lovely, isn't it? Away from everything Just snow and clear, cold nights (*The door bell rings*) Oh, that's probably Bert I told him to meet me here (*MAGGIE, as though she had not heard a word, goes quietly into the library LORRAINE relaxes*) You know, I'm looking forward to Lake Placid Bert's the kind of man who will do all winter sports beautifully

BANJO (*gently*) Will he set time? (*Voices are heard from the hallway "Whiteside?" "Yes, sir" "American Express" JOHN backs into the room, obviously directing a major operation*)

JOHN All right—come ahead Care now—careful—right in here It's for you, Mr Whiteside

LORRAINE Why, Sherry, what's this? (*Into view come two EXPRESSMEN, groaning and grunting under the weight of nothing more or less than an Egyptian mummy case It seems that MR WHITESIDE's friends are liable to think of anything*)

EXPRESSMAN Where do you want this put?

JOHN Right there

WHITESIDE Dear God, if there was one thing I needed right now it was an Egyptian mummy

BANJO (*reading from a tag*) "Merry Christmas from the Khedive of Egypt" What did you send him? Grant's Tomb?

(MR STANLEY, *drawn by the voices of the EXPRESSMEN, has descended the stairs in time to witness this newest hue and cry*)

STANLEY (*surveying the scene*) Five minutes, Mr Whiteside! (*He indicates the mummy case*) Including that (*And up the stairs again*)

LORRAINE Why, what was all that about? Who is that man?

WHITESIDE He announces the time every few minutes I pay him a small sum

LORRAINE But what on earth for, Sherry?

WHITESIDE (*violently*) I lost my watch!
(*From the hallway a familiar figure peeps in*)

DR BRADLEY Oh, excuse me, Mr Whiteside Are you busy?

WHITESIDE (*closing his eyes*) Good God!

DR BRADLEY (*coming into the room*) I've written a new chapter on the left kidney Suppose I— (*He smiles apologetically at LORRAINE and BANJO*) Pardon me (*Goes into the library*)

LORRAINE Is that the plumber again, Sherry? Oh, dear, I wonder where Bert is Darling, you're not very Christmassy—you're usually bubbling over on Christmas morning.

Who sent this to you, Sherry—the Khedive of Egypt? You know, I think it's rather beautiful I must go to Egypt some day—I really must. I know I'd love it The first time I went to Pompeii I cried all night All those people—all those lives. Where are they now? Sherry! Don't you ever think about that? I do Here was a woman—like myself—a woman who once lived and loved, full of the same passions, fears, jealousies, hates And what remains of any of it now? Just this, and nothing more (*She opens the case, then, with a sudden impulse, steps into it and folds her arms, mummy-fashion*) A span of four thousand years—a mere atom in the eternity of time—and here am I, another woman living out her life I want to cry (*She closes her eyes, and as she stands there, immobilized, the eyes of BANJO and WHITESIDE meet The same idea has leaped into their minds BANJO, rising slowly from the couch, starts to approach the mummy case, casually whistling "Dixie" But just before he reaches it LORRAINE steps blandly out*)

LORRAINE Oh, I mustn't talk this way today It's Christmas, it's Christmas! (*BANJO puts on a great act of unconcern*)

WHITESIDE (*rising to the occasion, and dripping pure charm*) Lorraine dear, have you ever played Saint Joan?

LORRAINE No, I haven't, Sherry What makes you ask that?

WHITESIDE There was something about your expression as you stood in that case—there was an absolute halo about you

LORRAINE Why, Sherry, how sweet!

WHITESIDE It transcended any mortal expression I've ever seen Step into it again, dear

LORRAINE Sherry, you're joshing me—aren't you?

WHITESIDE My dear, I don't make light of these things I was deeply moved There was a strange beauty about you, Lorraine—pure da Vinci Please do it again

LORRAINE Well, I don't know exactly what it was that I did, but I'll—*(She starts to step into the case again, then changes her mind)* Oh, I feel too silly, Sherry *(BANJO's eyes are fixed somewhere on the ceiling, but he is somewhat less innocent than he seems)*

WHITESIDE *(returning to the battle)* Lorraine dear, in that single moment you approached the epitome of your art, and you should not be ashamed of it You asked me a little while ago what I wanted for a Christmas present All that I want, Lorraine, is the memory of you in that mummy case

LORRAINE Why, darling, I'm—all choked up *(Crossing her arms, she takes a moment or two to throw herself in the mood, then steps reverently into the case)* "Dust thou art, and dust to dust—" *(Bang! BANJO has closed the case and fastened it WHITESIDE leaps out of the chair)*

WHITESIDE. Eureka!

BANJO There's service for you!

WHITESIDE Will she be all right in there?

BANJO Sure—she can breathe easy I'll let her out as soon as we get on the plane What are we going to do now? How do we get this out of here?

WHITESIDE One thing at a time—that's the next step

BANJO Think fast, Captain Think fast *(And MAGGIE enters from the library, papers in hand WHITESIDE scrambles back into his chair, BANJO is again the little innocent)*

MAGGIE This is everything, Sherry—I'm leaving three carbons Is there anything out here? *(She inspects a small basket fastened to his chair)* What's in this basket?

WHITESIDE *(eager to be rid of her)* Nothing at all Thank you, thank you

MAGGIE Shall I file these letters? Do you want this picture?

WHITESIDE No—throw everything away Wait—give me the picture I want the picture

MAGGIE The only thing I haven't done is to put all your broadcasts in order Do you want me to do that?

WHITESIDE *(a flash of recollection has come to him as he takes HARRIET's photograph in his hand, but he contrives to smother his excitement)* What? Ah—do that, will you? Do it right away—it's very important. Right away, Maggie

MAGGIE I'll see you before I go,
Banjo (*She goes into the library
again, closing the doors*)

WHITESIDE (*watching her out, then
jumping up in great excitement*)
I've got it!

BANJO What?

WHITESIDE I knew I'd seen this
face before! I knew it! Now I know
how to get this out of here

BANJO What face? How?
(*And, at that instant, MR STANLEY
comes down the stairs, watch in
hand*)

STANLEY (*vastly enjoying himself*)
The time is up, Mr Whiteside Fif-
teen minutes

WHITESIDE Ah, yes, Mr Stanley
Fifteen minutes But just one favor
before I go I would like you to sum-
mon those two officers and ask them
to help this gentleman down to the
airport with this mummy case
Would you be good enough to do
that, Mr Stanley?

STANLEY I will do nothing of the
kind

WHITESIDE (*ever so sweetly*) Oh, I
think you will, Mr Stanley Or shall
I inform my radio audience, on my
next broadcast, that your sister, Har-
riet Stanley, is none other than the
famous Harnet Sedley, who mur-
dered her mother and father with an
axe twenty-five years ago in Glou-
cester, Massachusetts . (*At which
MR STANLEY quietly collapses into
a chair*) Come, Mr Stanley, it's a
very small favor Or would you
rather have the good folk of Mesalia

repeating at your very doorstep that
once-popular little jungle

"Harnet Sedley took an axe
And gave her mother forty whacks,
And when the job was nicely done,
She gave her father forty-one "

Remember, Mr Stanley, I too am
giving up something It would make
a hell of a broadcast Well?

STANLEY (*licked at last*) Mr White-
side, you are the damndest person
I have ever met

WHITESIDE I often think so myself,
old fellow Officers, will you
come in here, please?

BANJO Whiteside, you're a great
man (*He places a reverent kiss on
the mummy case*)

WHITESIDE (*as the DEPUTIES enter*)
Come right in, officers Mr Stanley
would like you to help this gentle-
man down to the airport with this
mummy case He is sending it to a
friend in Nova Scotia

BANJO Collect

WHITESIDE Right, Mr Stanley?

STANLEY (*weakly*) Yes Yes.

WHITESIDE Thank you, gentlemen
—handle it carefully Banjo, my
love, you're wonderful and I may
write a book about you

BANJO Don't bother—I can't read
(*To MAGGIE, as she enters from li-
brary*) Good-bye, Maggie—love con-
quers all Don't drop that case,
boys—it contains an antique (*And
out he goes with the mummy case,*

to say nothing of MISS LORRAINE SHELDON)

MAGGIE (*catching on to what has happened*) Sherry! Sherry, was that —?

WHITESIDE It was indeed The field is clear and you have my blessing

MAGGIE Sherry! Sherry, you old reprobate!

WHITESIDE Just send me a necktie sometime My hat and coat, Maggie, and also your railroad ticket I am leaving for New York

MAGGIE You're leaving, Sherry?

WHITESIDE Don't argue, Rat Girl— Do as you're told

MAGGIE Yes, Mr Whiteside (*She goes happily into the library, just as BERT returns*)

BERT Mr Whiteside, I want to apologize for—

WHITESIDE Don't give it a thought, Bert There's been a slight change of plan Miss Sheldon is off on a world cruise— I am taking your play to Katharine Cornell Miss Cutler will explain everything (*MAGGIE brings WHITESIDE's coat, hat, cane*) Oh, thank you, Maggie, my darling (*And just then the DOCTOR comes out of the library Still trying*)

DR BRADLEY Mr Whiteside, are you very busy?

WHITESIDE Ah, yes, Doctor Very busy But if you ever get to New York, Doctor try and find me (*He takes MAGGIE in his arms*) Good bye, my lamb I love you very much

MAGGIE Sherry, you're wonderful

WHITESIDE Nonsense Good-bye, Jefferson You'll never know the trouble you've caused

BERT Good-bye, Mr Whiteside

WHITESIDE Good-bye, Mr Stanley I would like to hear, in the near future, that your daughter has married her young man and that your son has been permitted to follow his own bent OR ELSE Merry Christmas, everybody! (*And out he strolls But the worst is yet to come There is a loud crash on the porch, followed by an anguished yell MAGGIE gives a little shriek and rushes out BERT and the DOCTOR rush after her Down the stairs come MRS STANLEY, JUNE and RICHARD From the dining room JOHN and SARAH come running "What's happened?" "What is it?" And then we see Into view come BERT and the DOCTOR, carrying MR WHITESIDE between them He is screaming his head off*)

WHITESIDE Miss Preen! Miss Preen! I want Miss Preen back! Mr Stanley, I am suing you for three hundred and fifty thousand dollars! (*MR STANLEY throws up his hands in despair MRS STANLEY simply faints away*)

CURTAIN

The Time of Your Life

BY WILLIAM SAROYAN

TO
GEORGE JEAN NATHAN

In the time of your life, live—so that in that good time there shall be no ugliness or death for yourself or for any life your life touches. Seek goodness everywhere, and when it is found, bring it out of its hiding-place and let it be free and unashamed. Place in matter and in flesh the least of the values, for these are the things that hold death and must pass away. Discover in all things that which shines and is beyond corruption. Encourage virtue in whatever heart it may have been driven into secrecy and sorrow by the shame and terror of the world. Ignore the obvious, for it is unworthy of the clear eye and the kindly heart. Be the inferior of no man, nor of any man be the superior. Remember that every man is a variation of yourself. No man's guilt is not yours, nor is any man's innocence a thing apart. Despise evil and ungodliness, but not men of ungodliness or evil. These, understand. Have no shame in being kindly and gentle, but if the time comes in the time of your life to kill, kill and have no regret. In the time of your life, live—so that in that wondrous time you shall not add to the misery and sorrow of the world, but shall smile to the infinite delight and mystery of it.

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The Time of Your Life was first produced at the Booth Theatre, New York City, by Eddie Dowling, on October 25, 1939, and closed on October 19, 1940. Following is the original cast:

| | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| THE NEWSBOY | Ross Bagdasarian |
| THE DRUNKARD | John Farrell |
| WILLIE | Will Lee |
| IRA | Eddie Dowling |
| NICK | Charles de Sherm |
| TOM | Edward Andrews |
| KITTY DUVAL | Julie Haydon |
| DUDLEY | Curt Conway |
| HARRY | Gene Kelly |
| WESLEY | Reginald Beane |
| LORENE | Nene Vibber |
| BLICK | Grover Burgess |
| ARAB | Houseley Stevens, Sr |
| MARY L | Celeste Holme |
| KRUPP | William Bendix |
| MCCARTHY | Tom Tully |
| KIT CARSON | Len Doyle |
| NICK'S MA | Michelette Burani |
| SAILOR | Randolph Wade |
| ELSIE | Cathie Bailey |
| A KILLER | Evelyn Geller |
| HER SIDE KICK | Mary Cheffey |
| A SOCIETY LADY | Eva Leonard Boyne |
| A SOCIETY GENTLEMAN | Ainsworth Arnold |
| FIRST COP | Randolph Wade |
| SECOND COP | John Farrell |

THE PLACE

Nick's Pacific Street Saloon, Restaurant, and Entertainment Palace at the foot of Embarcadero, in San Francisco. A suggestion of room 21 at The New York Hotel, upstairs, around the corner

THE TIME

Afternoon and night of a day in October, 1939

THE TIME OF YOUR LIFE

ACT ONE

NICK's is an American place a San Francisco waterfront honky-tonk

At a table, JOE always calm, always quiet, always thinking, always eager, always bored, always superior His expensive clothes are casually and youthfully worn and give him an almost boyish appearance He is thinking

Behind the bar, NICK a big red-headed young Italian-American with an enormous naked woman tattooed in red on the inside of his right arm He is studying The Racing Form

The ARAB, at his place at the end of the bar He is a lean old man with a rather ferocious old-country mustache, with the ends twisted up Between the thumb and forefinger of his left hand is the Mohammedan tattoo indicating that he has been to Mecca He is sipping a glass of beer

It is about eleven-thirty in the morning SAM is sweeping out We see only his back He disappears into the kitchen The SAILOR at the bar finishes his drink and leaves, moving thoughtfully, as though he were trying very hard to discover how to live

The NEWSBOY comes in

NEWSBOY (cheerfully) Good-morning, everybody (No answer To NICK) Paper, Mister? (NICK shakes his head, no The NEWSBOY goes to JOE) Paper, Mister? (JOE shakes his head, no The NEWSBOY walks away, counting papers)

JOE (noticing him) How many you got?

NEWSBOY Five (JOE gives him a quarter, takes all the papers, glances at the headlines with irritation, throws them away The NEWSBOY watches carefully, then goes)

ARAB (picks up paper, looks at headlines, shakes head as if rejecting everything else a man might say about the world) No foundation All the way down the line (The DRUNK comes in Walks to the telephone, looks for a nickel in the

chute, sits down at JOE's table NICK takes the DRUNK out The DRUNK returns)

DRUNK (champion of the Bill of R.ghts) This is a free country, ain't it?

(WILLIE, the marble-game maniac, explodes through the swinging doors and lifts the forefinger of his right hand comically, indicating one beer He is a very young man, not more than twenty He is wearing heavy shoes, a pair of old and dirty corduroys, a light green turtle-neck jersey with a large letter "F" on the chest, an oversize two-button tweed coat, and a green hat, with the brim up NICK sets out a glass of beer for him, he drinks it, straightens up vigorously saying "Aaah," makes a solemn face, gives NICK a one-finger salute of adieu, and begins to leave, refreshed and restored in spirit. He

walks by the marble game, halts suddenly, turns, studies the contraption, gestures as if to say, Oh, no Turns to go, stops, returns to the machine, studies it, takes a handful of small coins out of his pants pocket, lifts a nickel, indicates with a gesture, One game, no more Puts the nickel in the slot, pushes in the slide, making an interesting noise)

NICK You can't beat that machine

WILLIE Oh, yeah? (The marbles fall, roll, and take their place He pushes down the lever, placing one marble in position Takes a very deep breath, walks in a small circle, excited at the beginning of great drama Stands straight and pious before the contest Himself vs the machine Willie vs Destiny His skill and daring vs the cunning and trickery of the novelty industry of America, and the whole challenging world He is the last of the American pioneers, with nothing more to fight but the machine, with no other reward than lights going on and off, and six nickels for one Before him is the last champion, the machine He is the last challenger, the young man with nothing to do in the world WILLIE grips the knob delicately, studies the situation carefully, draws the knob back, holds it a moment, and then releases it The first marble rolls out among the hazards, and the contest is on At the very beginning of the play "The Missouri Waltz" is coming from the phonograph The music ends here This is the signal for the beginning of the play JOE suddenly comes out of his reverie He whistles the way people do who are calling a cab that's about a block away, only he does it quietly WILLIE turns around, but JOE gestures for him to return to his work NICK looks up from The Racing Form

JOE (calling). Tom. (To himself) Where the hell is he, every time I need him? (He looks around calmly the nickel-in-the-slot phonograph in the corner, the open public telephone, the stage, the marble-game, the bar, and so on He calls again, this time very loud) Hey, Tom

NICK (with morning irritation). What do you want?

JOE (without thinking) I want the boy to get me a watermelon, that's what I want What do you want? Money, or love, or fame, or what? You won't get them studying The Racing Form

NICK I like to keep abreast of the times

(TOM comes hurrying in He is a great big man of about thirty or so who appears to be much younger because of the childlike expression of his face handsome, dumb, innocent, troubled, and a little bewildered by everything He is obviously adult in years, but it seems as if by all rights he should still be a boy He is defensive as clumsy, self-conscious, overgrown boys are He is wearing a flashy cheap suit JOE leans back and studies him with casual disapproval TOM slackens his pace and becomes clumsy and embarrassed, waiting for the bawling-out he's pretty sure he's going to get)

JOE (objectively, severely, but a little amused) Who saved your life?

TOM (sincerely) You did, Joe Thanks

JOE (interested) How'd I do it?

TOM (confused) What?

JOE (even more interested). How'd I do it?

TOM. Joe, you know how you did it

JOE (*softly*) I want you to answer me How'd I save your life? I've forgotten

TOM (*remembering, with a big sorrowful smile*) You made me eat all that chicken soup three years ago when I was sick and hungry

JOE (*fascinated*). Chicken soup?

TOM (*eagerly*) Yeah

JOE Three years? Is it that long?

TOM (*delighted to have the information*) Yeah, sure 1937 1938 1939 This is 1939, Joe

JOE (*amused*) Never mind what year it is Tell me the whole story

TOM You took me to the doctor You gave me money for food and clothes, and paid my room rent Aw, Joe, you know all the different things you did (JOE *nods, turning away from TOM after each question*)

JOE You in good health now?

TOM Yeah, Joe

JOE You got clothes?

TOM Yeah, Joe

JOE You eat three times a day Sometimes four?

TOM Yeah, Joe Sometimes five

JOE You got a place to sleep?

TOM Yeah, Joe.

(JOE *nods* Pauses Studies TOM carefully)

JOE Then, where the hell have you been?

TOM (*humbly*) Joe, I was out in the street listening to the boys They're talking about the trouble down here on the waterfront

JOE (*sharply*). I want you to be around when I need you

TOM (*pleased that the bawling-out is over*) I won't do it again Joe, one guy out there says there's got to be a revolution before anything will ever be all right

JOE (*impatiently*) I know all about it Now, here Take this money Go up to the Emporium You know where the Emporium is?

TOM Yeah, sure, Joe

JOE All right Take the elevator and go up to the fourth floor Walk around to the back, to the toy department Buy me a couple of dollars' worth of toys and bring them here

TOM (*amazed*) Toys? What kind of toys, Joe?

JOE Any kind of toys Little ones that I can put on this table

TOM. What do you want toys for, Joe?

JOE (*mildly angry*) What?

TOM All right, all right You don't have to get sore at *everything* What'll people think, a big guy like me buying toys?

JOE What people?

TOM Aw, Joe, you're always making me do crazy things for you, and I'm

the guy that gets embarrassed You just sit in this place and make me do all the dirty work

JOE (*looking away*) Do what I tell you

TOM O K, but I wish I knew why (*He makes to go*)

JOE Wait a minute Here's a nickel Put it in the phonograph Number seven I want to hear that waltz again

TOM Boy, I'm glad I don't have to stay and listen to it Joe, what do you hear in that song anyway? We listen to that song ten times a day Why can't we hear number six, or two, or nine? There are a lot of other numbers

JOE (*emphatically*) Put the nickel in the phonograph (*Pause*) Sit down and wait till the music's over Then go get me some toys

TOM O K O K

JOE (*loudly*) Never mind being a martyr about it either The cause isn't worth it

(TOM puts the nickel into the machine, with a ritual of impatient and efficient movement which plainly shows his lack of sympathy or enthusiasm His manner also reveals, however, that his lack of sympathy is spurious and exaggerated Actually, he is fascinated by the music, but is so confused by it that he pretends he dislikes it The music begins It is another variation of "The Missouri Waltz," played dreamily and softly, with perfect orchestral form, and with a theme of weeping in the horns repeated a number of times At first TOM listens with something close to irritation, since he can't understand

what is so attractive in the music to JOE, and what is so painful and confusing in it to himself Very soon, however, he is carried away by the melancholy story of grief and nostalgia of the song He stands, troubled by the poetry and confusion in himself JOE, on the other hand, listens as if he were not listening, indifferent and unmoved What he's interested in is TOM He turns and glances at TOM KITTY DUVAL, who lives in a room in The New York Hotel, around the corner, comes beyond the swinging doors quietly, and walks slowly to the bar, her reality and rhythm a perfect accompaniment to the sorrowful American music, which is her music, as it is TOM's Which the world drove out of her, putting in its place brokenness and all manner of spiritually crippled forms She seems to understand this, and is angry Angry with herself, full of hate for the poor world, and full of pity and contempt for its tragic, unbelievable, confounded people She is a small powerful girl, with that kind of delicate and rugged beauty which no circumstance of evil or ugly reality can destroy This beauty is that element of the immortal which is in the seed of good and common people, and which is kept alive in some of the female of our kind, no matter how accidentally or pointlessly they may have entered the world KITTY DUVAL is somebody There is an angry purity, and a fierce pride, in her In her stance, and way of walking, there is grace and arrogance JOE recognizes her as a great person immediately She goes to the bar)

KITTY Beer

(NICK places a glass of beer before her mechanically She swallows half the drink, and listens to the music again.

TOM turns and sees her He becomes dead to everything in the world but her He stands like a lump, fascinated and undone by his almost religious adoration for her JOE notices TOM)

JOE (gently) Tom (TOM begins to move toward the bar, where KITTLY is standing Loudly) Tom (TOM halts, then turns, and JOE motions to him to come over to the table TOM goes over Quietly) Have you got everything straight?

TOM (out of the world) What?

JOE What do you mean, what? I just gave you some instructions

TOM (pathetically) What do you want, Joe?

JOE I want you to come to your senses (He stands up quietly and knocks TOM's hat off TOM picks up his hat quickly)

TOM I got it, Joe I got it The Emporium Fourth floor In the back The toy department Two dollars' worth of toys That you can put on a table

KITTLY (to herself) Who the hell is he to push a big man like that around?

JOE I'll expect you back in a half hour Don't get side-tracked anywhere Just do what I tell you

TOM (pleading) Joe? Can't I bet four bits on a horse race? There's a long shot—Precious Time—that's going to win by ten lengths I got to have money

(JOE points to the street TOM goes out NICK is combing his hair, looking in the mirror)

NICK I thought you wanted him to get you a watermelon

JOE I forgot (He watches KITTLY a moment To KITTLY, clearly, slowly, with great compassion) What's the dream?

KITTLY (moving to JOE, coming to). What?

JOE (holding the dream for her) What's the dream, now?

KITTLY (coming still closer) What dream?

JOE What dream! The dream you're dreaming

NICK Suppose he did bring you a watermelon? What the hell would you do with it?

JOE (irritated) I'd put it on this table I'd look at it Then I'd eat it What do you think I'd do with it, sell it for a profit?

NICK How should I know what you'd do with anything? What I'd like to know is, where do you get your money from? What work do you do?

JOE (looking at KITTLY) Bring us a bottle of champagne

KITTLY Champagne?

JOE (simply) Would you rather have something else?

KITTLY What's the big idea?

JOE I thought you might like some champagne I myself am very fond of it

KITTLY Yeah, but what's the big idea? You can't push me around

JOE (*gently but severely*) It's not in my nature to be unkind to another human being I have only contempt for wit. Otherwise I might say something obvious, therefore cruel, and perhaps untrue

KITTY You be careful what you think about me

JOE (*slowly, not looking at her*) I have only the noblest thoughts for both your person and your spirit

NICK (*having listened carefully and not being able to make it out*) What are you talking about?

KITTY You shut up You—

JOE He owns this place He's an important man All kinds of people come to him looking for work Comedians Singers Dancers

KITTY I don't care He can't call me names

NICK All right, sister I know how it is with a two-dollar whore in the morning

KITTY (*furiously*) Don't you dare call me names I used to be in burlesque

NICK If you were ever in burlesque, I used to be Charlie Chaplin

KITTY (*angry and a little pathetic*) I was in burlesque I played the burlesque circuit from coast to coast I've had flowers sent to me by European royalty I've had dinner with young men of wealth and social position

NICK You're dreaming.

KITTY (*to JOE*) I was in burlesque. Kitty Duval. That was my name. Life-size photographs of me in costume in front of burlesque theaters all over the country

JOE (*gently, coaxingly*) I believe you Have some champagne

NICK (*going to table, with champagne bottle and glasses*) There he goes again

JOE Miss Duval?

KITTY (*sincerely, going over*) That's not my real name That's my stage name

JOE I'll call you by your stage name

NICK (*pouring*) All right, sister, make up your mind Are you going to have champagne with him, or not?

JOE Pour the lady some wine

NICK O K, Professor Why you come to this joint instead of one of the high-class dumps uptown is more than I can understand Why don't you have champagne at the St Francis? Why don't you drink with a lady?

KITTY (*furiously*) Don't you call me names—you dentist

JOE Dentist?

NICK (*amazed, loudly*) What kind of cussing is that? (*Pause Looking at KITTY, then at JOE, bewildered*) This guy doesn't belong here The only reason I've got champagne is because he keeps ordering it all the time (*To KITTY*) Don't think you're the only one he drinks champagne with He drinks with all of them (*Pause*) He's crazy Or something

JOE (*confidentially*) Nick, I think you're going to be all right in a couple of centuries

NICK I'm sorry, I don't understand your English
(JOE lifts his glass KITTY slowly lifts hers, not quite sure of what's going on.)

JOE (*sincerely*) To the spirit, Kitty Duval

KITTY (*beginning to understand, and very grateful, looking at him*) Thank you

JOE (*calling*) Nick

NICK Yeah?

JOE. Would you mind putting a nickel in the machine again? Number—

NICK Seven I know I know I don't mind at all, Your Highness, although, personally, I'm not a lover of music (*Going to the machine*) As a matter of fact I think Tchaikowsky was a dope

JOE Tchaikowsky? Where'd you ever hear of Tchaikowsky?

NICK He was a dope

JOE Yeah Why?

NICK They talked about him on the radio one Sunday morning He was a sucker He let a woman drive him crazy

JOE. I see.

NICK I stood behind that bar listening to the God-damn stuff and cried like a baby None but the lonely heart! He was a dope

JOE What made you cry?

NICK What?

JOE (*sternly*) What made you cry, Nick?

NICK (*angry with himself*) I don't know

JOE I've been underestimating you, Nick Play number seven

NICK They get everybody worked up They give everybody stuff they shouldn't have (NICK puts the nickel into the machine and the Waltz begins again He listens to the music. Then studies The Racing Form)

KITTY (*to herself, dreaming*) I like champagne, and everything that goes with it Big houses with big porches, and big rooms with big windows, and big lawns, and big trees, and flowers growing everywhere, and big shepherd dogs sleeping in the shade

NICK I'm going next door to Frankie's to make a bet I'll be right back

JOE Make one for me.

NICK (*going to JOE*) Who do you like?

JOE (*giving him money*) Precious Time

NICK Ten dollars? Across the board?

JOE No On the nose

NICK OK (He goes DUDLEY R BOSTWICK, as he calls himself, breaks through the swinging doors, and practically flings himself upon the open telephone beside the phonograph DUDLEY is a young man of

about twenty-four or twenty-five, ordinary and yet extraordinary. He is smallish, as the saying is, neatly dressed in bargain clothes, overworked and irritated by the routine and dullness and monotony of his life, apparently nobody and nothing, but in reality a great personality. The swindled young man. Educated, but without the least real understanding. A brave, dumb, salmon-spirit struggling for life in weary, stupefied flesh, dueling ferociously with a banal mind which has been only irritated by what it has been taught. He is a great personality because, against all these handicaps, what he wants is simple and basic: a woman. This urgent and violent need, common yet miraculous enough in itself, considering the unhappy environment of the animal, is the force which elevates him from nothingness to greatness. A ridiculous greatness, but in the nature of things beautiful to behold. All that he has been taught, and everything he believes, is phony, and yet he himself is real, almost super-real, because of this indestructible force in himself. His face is ridiculous. His personal rhythm is tense and jittery. His speech is shrill and violent. His gestures are wild. His ego is disjointed and epileptic. And yet deeply he possesses the same wholeness of spirit, and directness of energy, that is in all species of animals. There is little innate or cultivated spirit in him, but there is no absence of innocent animal force. He is a young man who has been taught that he has a chance, as a person, and believes it. As a matter of fact, he hasn't a chance in the world, and should have been told by somebody, or should not have had his natural and valuable ignorance spoiled by education, running an otherwise perfectly good and charming member of the

human race. At the telephone he immediately begins to dial furiously, hesitates, changes his mind, stops dialing, hangs up furiously, and suddenly begins again. Not more than half a minute after the firecracker arrival of DUDLEY R. BOSTWICK, occurs the polka-and-waltz arrival of HARRY. HARRY is another story. He comes in timidly, turning about uncertainly, awkward, out of place everywhere, embarrassed and encumbered by the contemporary costume, sick at heart, but determined to fit in somewhere. His arrival constitutes a dance. His clothes don't fit. The pants are a little too large. The coat, which doesn't match, is also a little too large, and loose. He is a dumb young fellow, but he has ideas. A philosophy, in fact. His philosophy is simple and beautiful. The world is sorrowful. The world needs laughter. HARRY is funny. The world needs HARRY. HARRY will make the world laugh. He has probably had a year or two of high school. He has also listened to the boys at the pool room. He's looking for NICK. He goes to the ARAB, and says, "Are you Nick?" The ARAB shakes his head. He stands at the bar, waiting. He waits very busily.)

HARRY (as NICK returns) You Nick?

NICK (very loudly) I am Nick.

HARRY (acting) Can you use a great comedian?

NICK (behind the bar) Who, for instance?

HARRY (almost angry) Me.

NICK You? What's funny about you? (DUDLEY at the telephone, is dialing. Because of some defect in the apparatus the dialing is very loud.)

DUDLEY Hello Sunset 7349? May I speak to Miss Elsie Mandelspiegel? (Pause)

HARRY (*with spirit and noise, dancing*) I dance and do gags and stuff

NICK In costume? Or are you wearing your costume?

DUDLEY All I need is a cigar

KITTY (*continuing the dream of grace*) I'd walk out of the house, and stand on the porch, and look at the trees, and smell the flowers, and run across the lawn, and lie down under a tree, and read a book (Pause) A book of poems, maybe

DUDLEY (*very, very clearly*) Elsie Mandelspiegel (*Impatiently*) She has a room on the fourth floor She's a nurse at the Southern Pacific Hospital Elsie Mandelspiegel She works at night Elsie Yes (*He begins waiting again* WESLEY, a colored boy, comes to the bar and stands near HARRY, waiting)

NICK Beer?

WESLEY No, sir I'd like to talk to you

NICK (*to HARRY*) All right Get funny

HARRY (*getting funny, an altogether different person, an actor with great energy, both in power of voice, and in force and speed of physical gesture*) Now, I'm standing on the corner of Third and Market I'm looking around I'm figuring it out There it is. Right in front of me. The whole city The whole world People going by. They're going somewhere. I don't know where, but they're going. I ain't

going *anywhere* Where the hell can you go? I'm figuring it out All right. I'm a citizen A fat guy bumps his stomach into the face of an old lady They were in a hurry Fat and old They bumped Boom I don't know It may mean war War Germany England Russia I don't know for sure (*Loudly, dramatically, he salutes, about faces, presents arms, aims, and fires*) WAAAAAR (*He blows a call to arms* NICK gets sick of this, indicates with a gesture that HARRY should hold it, and goes to WESLEY)

NICK What's on your mind?

WESLEY (*confused*) Well—

NICK Come on Speak up Are you hungry, or what?

WESLEY Honest to God, I ain't hungry All I want is a job I don't want no charity

NICK Well, what can you do, and how good are you?

WESLEY I can run errands, clean up, wash dishes, anything

DUDLEY (*On the telephone, very eagerly*) Elsie? Elsie, this is Dudley. Elsie, I'll jump in the bay if you don't marry me Life isn't worth living without you I can't sleep I can't think of anything but you All the time Day and night and night and day Elsie, I love you I love you What? (*Burning up*) Is this Sunset 7-3-4-9? (Pause) 7943? (*Calmly while WILLIS begins making a small racket*) Well, what's your name? Lorene? Lorene Smith? I thought you were Elsie Mandelspiegel What? Dudley Yeah Dudley R Bostwick. Yeah R It stands for Raoul, but I

never spell it out I'm pleased to meet you, too What? There's a lot of noise around here (*WILLIE stops hitting the marble-game*) Where am I? At Nick's, on Pacific Street I work at the S P I told them I was sick and they gave me the afternoon off Wait a minute I'll ask them I'd like to meet you, too Sure I'll ask them (*Turns around to NICK*) What's this address?

NICK Number 3 Pacific Street, you cad

DUDLEY Cad? You don't know how I've been suffering on account of Elsie I take things too ceremoniously I've got to be more lackadaisical (*Into telephone*) Hello, Elenore? I mean, Lorene It's number 3 Pacific Street Yeah Sure I'll wait for you How'll you know me? You'll know me I'll recognize you Good-by, now (*He hangs up*)

HARRY (*continuing his monologue, with gestures, movements, and so on*) I'm standing there I didn't do anything to anybody Why should I be a soldier? (*Sincerely, insanely*) BOOOOOOOOOM WAR! O K War I retreat I hate war I move to Sacramento

NICK (*shouting*) All right, Comedian Lay off a minute

HARRY (*broken-hearted, going to WILLIE*) Nobody's got a sense of humor any more The world's dying for comedy like never before, but nobody knows how to laugh

NICK (*to WESLEY*). Do you belong to the union?

WESLEY What union?

NICK For the love of Mike, where've you been? Don't you know you can't come into a place and ask for a job and get one and go to work, just like that You've got to belong to one of the unions

WESLEY I didn't know I got to have a job Real soon

NICK Well, you've got to belong to a union

WESLEY I don't want any favors All I want is a chance to earn a living

NICK Go on into the kitchen and tell Sam to give you some lunch

WESLEY Honest, I ain't hungry

DUDLEY (*shouting*) What I've gone through for Elsie

HARRY I've got all kinds of funny ideas in my head to help make the world happy again

NICK (*holding WESLEY*) No, he isn't hungry

(*WESLEY almost faints from hunger, NICK catches him just in time The ARAB and NICK go off with WESLEY into the kitchen*)

HARRY (*to WILLIE*) See if you think this is funny It's my own idea I created this dance myself It comes after the monologue (*HARRY begins to dance WILLIE watches a moment, and then goes back to the game It's a goofy dance, which HARRY does with great sorrow, but much energy*)

DUDLEY Elsie Aw, gee, Elsie What the hell do I want to see Lorene Smith for? Some girl I don't know (*JOE and KITTY have been drinking in silence There is no sound now ex-*

cept the soft-shoe shuffling of HARRY, the Comedian)

JOE What's the dream now, Kitty Duval?

KITTY (*dreaming the words and pictures*) I dream of home Christ, I always dream of home I've no home I've no place But I always dream of all of us together again We had a farm in Ohio There was nothing good about it It was always sad There was always trouble But I always dream about it as if I could go back and Papa would be there and Mamma and Louie and my little brother Stephen and my sister Mary I'm Polish Duval! My name isn't Duval, it's Koranovsky Katerina Koranovsky We lost everything The house, the farm, the trees, the horses, the cows, the chickens Papa died He was old He was thirteen years older than Mamma We moved to Chicago We tried to work We tried to stay together Louie got in trouble The fellows he was with killed him for something I don't know what Stephen ran away from home Seventeen years old I don't know where he is. Then Mamma died (*Pause*) What's the dream? I dream of home (*NICK comes out of the kitchen with WESLEY*)

NICK Here Sit down here and rest That'll hold you for a while Why didn't you tell me you were hungry? You all right now?

WESLEY (*sitting down in the chair at the piano*) Yes, I am Thank you I didn't know I was *that* hungry

NICK Fine (*To HARRY who is dancing*) Hey. What the hell do you think you're doing?

HARRY (*stopping*). That's my own idea I'm a natural-born dancer and comedian

(*WESLEY begins slowly, one note, one chord at a time, to play the piano*)

NICK You're no good Why don't you try some other kind of work? Why don't you get a job in a store, selling something? What do you want to be a comedian for?

HARRY I've got something for the world and they haven't got sense enough to let me give it to them Nobody knows me

DUDLEY Elsie Now I'm waiting for some dame I've never seen before. Lorene Smith Never saw her in my life Just happened to get the wrong number She turns on the personality, and I'm a cooked Indian Give me a beer, please

HARRY Nick, you've got to see my act It's the greatest thing of its kind in America All I want is a chance No salary to begin Let me try it out tonight If I don't wow 'em, O K, I'll go home If vaudeville wasn't dead, a guy like me would have a chance

NICK You're not funny You're a sad young punk What the hell do you want to try to be funny for? You'll break everybody's heart What's there for you to be funny about? You've been poor all your life, haven't you?

HARRY I've been poor all right, but don't forget that some things count more than some other things

NICK What counts more, for instance, than what else, for instance?

HARRY Talent, for instance, counts more than money, for instance, that's

what, and I've got talent I get new ideas night and day Everything comes natural to me I've got style, but it'll take me a little time to round it out That's all

(By now WESLEY is playing something of his own which is very good and out of the world He plays about half a minute, after which HARRY begins to dance)

NICK (watching) I run the louisiest dive in Frisco, and a guy arrives and makes me stock up with champagne The whores come in and holler at me that they're ladies Talent comes in and begs me for a chance to show itself Even society people come here once in a while I don't know what for Maybe it's liquor Maybe it's the location Maybe it's my personality Maybe it's the crazy personality of the joint The old honky-tonk (Pause) Maybe they can't feel at home anywhere else

(By now WESLEY is really playing, and HARRY is going through a new routine DUDLEY grows sadder and sadder)

KITTY Please dance with me

JOE (loudly) I never learned to dance

KITTY Anybody can dance Just hold me in your arms

JOE I'm very fond of you I'm sorry I can't dance I wish to God I could

KITTY Oh, please

JOE Forgive me I'd like to very much

(KITTY dances alone TOM comes in with a package He sees KITTY and goes ga-ga again He comes out of the trance and puts the bundle on the table in front of JOE)

JOE (taking the package) What'd you get?

TOM Two dollars' worth of toys That's what you sent me for The girl asked me what I wanted with toys I didn't know what to tell her (He stares at KITTY, then back at JOE) Joe? I've got to have some money After all you've done for me, I'll do anything in the world for you, but, Joe, you got to give me some money once in a while

JOE What do you want it for? (TOM turns and stares at KITTY dancing)

JOE (noticing) Sure Here Here's five (Shouting) Can you dance?

TOM (proudly) I got second prize at the Palomar in Sacramento five years ago

JOE (loudly, opening package) O K , dance with her

TOM You mean her?

JOE (loudly) I mean Kitty Duval, the burlesque queen I mean the queen of the world burlesque Dance with her She wants to dance

TOM (worshipping the name Kitty Duval, helplessly) Joe, can I tell you something?

JOE (he brings out a toy and winds it) You don't have to I know You love her You really love her I'm not blind I know But take care of yourself Don't get sick that way again

NICK (looking at and listening to WESLEY with amazement) Comes in here and wants to be a dish-washer Faints from hunger And then sits down and plays better than Heifetz

JOE Heifetz plays the violin

NICK All right, don't get careful
He's good, ain't he?

TOM (to KITTY) Kitty

JOE (he lets the toy go, loudly)
Don't talk Just dance

(TOM and KITTY dance NICK is at the bar, watching everything HARRY is dancing DUDLEY is grieving into his beer LORENE SMITH, about thirty-seven, very overbearing and funny-looking, comes to the bar)

NICK What'll it be, lady?

LORENE (looking about and scaring all the young men) I'm looking for the young man I talked to on the telephone Dudley R Bostwick

DUDLEY (jumping, running to her, stopping, shocked) Dudley R (Slowly) Bostwick? Oh, yeah He left here ten minutes ago You mean Dudley Bostwick, that poor man on crutches?

LORENE Crutches?

DUDLEY Yeah Dudley Bostwick That's what he said his name was He said to tell you not to wait

LORENE Well (She begins to go, turns around) Are you sure you're not Dudley Bostwick?

DUDLEY Who—me? (Grandly) My name is Roger Tenefrancia I'm a French-Canadian I never saw the poor fellow before

LORENE It seems to me your voice is like the voice I heard over the telephone

DUDLEY A coincidence An accident A quirk of fate One of those things

Dismiss the thought. That poor cripple hobbled out of here ten minutes ago

LORENE He said he was going to commit suicide I only wanted to be of help (She goes)

DUDLEY Be of help? What kind of help could she be of? (DUDLEY runs to the telephone in the corner) Gee whiz, Elsie Gee whiz I'll never leave you again (He turns the pages of a little address book) Why do I always forget the number? I've tried to get her on the phone a hundred times this week and I still forget the number She won't come to the phone, but I keep trying anyway She's out She's not in She's working I get the wrong number Everything goes haywire I can't sleep (Defiantly) She'll come to the phone one of these days If there's anything to true love at all, she'll come to the phone Sunset 7349 (He dials the number, as JOE goes on studying the toys They are one big mechanical toy, whistles, and a music box JOE blows into the whistles, quickly, by way of getting casually acquainted with them TOM and KITTY stop dancing TOM stores at her)

DUDLEY Hello Is this Sunset 7349? May I speak to Elsie? Yes (Emphatically, and bitterly) No, this is not Dudley Bostwick This is Roger Tenefrancia of Montreal, Canada I'm a childhood friend of Miss Mandelspiegel We went to kindergarten together (Hand over phone) God damn it (Into phone) Yes I'll wait, thank you

TOM I love you

KITTY You want to go to my room? (TOM can't answer) Have you got two dollars?

TOM (*shaking his head with confusion*) I've got five dollars, but I love you

KITTY (*looking at him*) You want to spend all that money? (*TOM embraces her They go* **JOE** *watches* *Goes back to the toy*)

JOE Where's that longshoreman, McCarthy?

NICK He'll be around

JOE What do you think he'll have to say today?

NICK Plenty, as usual I'm going next door to see who won that third race at Laurel

JOE Precious Time won it

NICK That's what you think (*He goes*)

JOE (*to himself*) A horse named McCarthy is running in the sixth race today

DUDLEY (*on the phone*) Hello Hello, Elsie? Elsie? (*His voice weakens, also his limbs*) My God She's come to the phone Elsie, I'm at Nick's on Pacific Street You've got to come here and talk to me Hello Hello, Elsie? (*Amazed*) Did she hang up? Or was I disconnected? (*He hangs up and goes to bar* **WESLEY** *is still playing the piano* **HARRY** *is still dancing* **JOE** *has wound up the big mechanical toy and is watching it work* **NICK** *returns*)

NICK (*watching the toy*) Say That's some gadget

JOE How much did I win?

NICK How do you know you won?

JOE Don't be silly He said Precious Time was going to win by ten lengths, didn't he? He's in love, isn't he?

NICK O K I don't know why, but Precious Time won You got eighty for ten How do you do it?

JOE (*roaring*) Faith Faith How'd he win?

NICK By a nose Look him up in The Racing Form The slowest, the cheapest, the worst horse in the race, and the worst jockey What's the matter with my luck?

JOE How much did you lose?

NICK Fifty cents

JOE You should never gamble

NICK Why not?

JOE You always bet fifty cents You've got no more faith than a flea, that's why

HARRY (*shouting*) How do you like this, Nick? (*He is really busy now, all legs and arms*)

NICK (*turning and watching*) Not bad Hang around You can wait table (*To Wesley*) Hey Wesley Can you play that again tonight?

WESLEY (*turning, but still playing the piano*) I don't know for sure, Mr Nick I can play something

NICK Good You hang around, too (*He goes behind the bar The atmosphere is now one of warm, natural,*

American ease, every man innocent and good, each doing what he believes he should do, or what he must do. There is deep American naïveté and faith in the behavior of each person. No one is competing with anyone else. No one hates anyone else. Every man is living, and letting live. Each man is following his destiny as he feels it should be followed, or is abandoning it as he feels it must, by now, be abandoned, or is forgetting it for the moment as he feels he should forget it. Although everyone is dead serious, there is unmistakable smiling and humor in the scene, a sense of the human body and spirit emerging from the world-imposed state of stress and fretfulness, fear and awkwardness, to the more natural state of casualness and grace. Each person belongs to the environment, in his own person, as himself. WESLEY is playing better than ever. HARRY is hoofing better than ever. NICK is behind the bar shining glasses. JOE is smiling at the toy and studying it. DUDLEY, although still troubled, is at least calm now and full of melancholy poise. WILLIE, at the marble-game, is happy. The ARAB is deep in his memories, where he wants to be. Into this scene and atmosphere comes BLICK. BLICK is the sort of human being you dislike at sight. He is no different from anybody else physically. His face is an ordinary face. There is nothing obviously wrong with him, and yet you know that it is impossible, even by the most generous expansion of understanding, to accept him as a human being. He is the strong man without strength—strong only among the weak—the weakling who uses force on the weaker. BLICK enters casually, as if he were a customer, and immediately HARRY begins slowing down.)

BLICK (*only, and with mock-friendliness*) Hello, Nick

NICK (*stopping his work and leaning across the bar*) What do you want to come here for? You're too big a man for a little honky-tonk

BLICK (*flattered*) Now, Nick

NICK Important people never come here. Here. Have a drink (*Whiskey bottle*)

BLICK Thanks, I don't drink

NICK (*drinking the drink himself*). Well, why don't you?

BLICK I have responsibilities

NICK You're head of the lousy Vice Squad. There's no vice here

BLICK (*sharply*) Street-walkers are working out of this place

NICK (*angry*) What do you want?

BLICK (*loudly*) I just want you to know that it's got to stop. (*The music stops. The mechanical toy runs down. There is absolute silence, and a strange fearfulness and disharmony in the atmosphere now. HARRY doesn't know what to do with his hands or feet. WESLEY's arms hang at his sides. JOE quietly pushes the toy to one side of the table, eager to study what is happening. WILLIE stops playing the marble-game, turns around and begins to wait. DUDLEY straightens up very, very vigorously, as if to say "Nothing can scare me. I know love is the only thing." The ARAB is the same as ever, but watchful. NICK is arrogantly aloof. There is a moment of this silence and tension, as though*

BLICK *were waiting for everybody to acknowledge his presence. He is obviously flattered by the acknowledgment of HARRY, DUDLEY, WESLEY, and WILLIE, but a little irritated by NICK's aloofness and unfriendliness*)

NICK Don't look at me. I can't tell a street-walker from a lady. You married?

BLICK You're not asking me questions. I'm telling you.

NICK *(interrupting)* You're a man of about forty-five or so. You ought to know better.

BLICK *(angry)* Street-walkers are working out of this place.

NICK *(beginning to shout)* Now, don't start any trouble with me. People come here to drink and loaf around. I don't care who they are.

BLICK Well, I do.

NICK The only way to find out if a lady is a street-walker is to walk the streets with her, go to bed, and make sure. You wouldn't want to do that. You'd like to, of course.

BLICK Any more of it, and I'll have your joint closed.

NICK *(very casually, without ill-will)* Listen. I've got no use for you, or anybody like you. You're out to change the world from something bad to something worse. Something like yourself.

BLICK *(furious pause, and contempt)* I'll be back tonight. *(He begins to go)*

NICK *(very angry but very calm)* Do yourself a big favor and don't come

back tonight. Send somebody else. I don't like your personality.

BLICK *(casually, but with contempt)* Don't break any laws. I don't like yours, either. *(He looks the place over, and goes. There is a moment of silence. Then WILLIE turns and puts a new nickel in the slot and starts a new game. WESLEY turns to the piano and rather falteringly begins to play. His heart really isn't in it. HARRY walks about, unable to dance. DUDLEY lapses into his customary melancholy, at a table. NICK whistles a little. Suddenly stops. JOE winds the toy.)*

JOE *(comically)* Nick. You going to kill that man?

NICK I'm disgusted.

JOE Yeah? Why?

NICK Why should I get worked up over a guy like that? Why should I hate him? He's nothing. He's nobody. He's a mouse. But every time he comes into this place I get burned up. He doesn't want to drink. He doesn't want to sit down. He doesn't want to take things easy. Tell me one thing?

JOE Do my best.

NICK What's a punk like that want to go out and try to change the world for?

JOE *(amazed)* Does he want to change the world, too?

NICK *(irritated)* You know what I mean. What's he want to bother people for? He's sick.

JOE *(almost to himself, reflecting on the fact that BLICK too wants to*

change the world). I guess he wants to change the world at that

NICK So I go to work and hate him

JOE It's not him, Nick It's everything

NICK Yeah, *I know* But I've still got no use for him He's no good You know what I mean? He hurts little people (*Confused*) One of the girls tried to commit suicide on account of him (*Furiously*) I'll break his head if he hurts anybody around here This is my joint (*Afterthought*) Or anybody's feelings, either

JOE He may not be so bad, deep down underneath

NICK I know all about him He's no good

(*During this talk WESLEY has really begun to play the piano, the toy is rattling again, and little by little HARRY has begun to dance NICK has come around the bar, and now, very much like a child—forgetting all his anger—is watching the toy work He begins to smile at everything turns and listens to WESLEY watches HARRY nods at the ARAB shakes his head at DUDLEY and gestures amiably about WILLIE It's his joint all right It's a good, low-down, honky-tonk American place that lets people alone*)

NICK I've got a good joint There's nothing wrong here Hey Come-

dian Stick to the dancing tonight I think you're O K Wesley? Do some more of that tonight That's fine!

HARRY Thanks, Nick Gosh, I'm on my way at last (*On telephone*) Hello, Ma? Is that you, Ma? Harry, I got the job (*He hangs up and walks around, smiling*)

NICK (*watching the toy all this time*) Say, that really is something What is that, anyway?

(MARY L comes in)

JOE (*holding it toward NICK, and MARY L*) Nick, this is a toy A contraption devised by the cunning of man to drive boredom, or grief, or anger out of children A noble gadget A gadget, I might say, infinitely nobler than any other I can think of at the moment (*Everybody gathers around JOE's table to look at the toy The toy stops working JOE winds the music box. Lifts a whistle blows it, making a very strange, funny and sorrowful sound*) Delightful Tragic, but delightful

(WESLEY plays the music-box theme on the piano MARY L takes a table)

NICK Joe That girl, Kitty What's she mean, calling me a dentist? I wouldn't hurt anybody, let alone a tooth

(NICK goes to MARY L's table HARRY imitates the toy Dances The piano music comes up, the light dims slowly, while the piano solo continues)

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

An hour later All the people who were at NICK's when the curtain came down are still there JOE at his table, quietly shuffling and turning a deck of cards, and at the same time watching the face of the WOMAN, and looking at the initials on her handbag, as though they were the symbols of the lost glory of the world. The WOMAN, in turn, very casually regards JOE occasionally Or rather senses him, has sensed him in fact the whole hour She is mildly tight on beer, and JOE himself is tight, but as always completely under control, simply sharper The others are about, at tables, and so on

JOE Is it Madge—Laubowitz?

MARY No (Slight pause) Joseph?

MARY Is what what?

JOE Is the name Mabel Lepescu?

JOE Well, not exactly That's my first name, but everybody calls me Joe The last name is the tough one I'll help you a little I'm Irish (Pause) Is it just plain Mary?

MARY What name?

JOE The name the initials M L stand for The initials on your bag

MARY Yes, it is I'm Irish, too At least on my father's side English on my mother's side

MARY No

JOE (after a long pause, thinking deeply what the name might be, turning a card, looking into the beautiful face of the woman) Margie Longworthy?

JOE I'm Irish on both sides Mary's one of my favorite names I guess that's why I didn't think of it I met a girl in Mexico City named Mary once She was an American from Philadelphia She got married there In Mexico City, I mean While I was there We were in love, too At least I was You never know about anyone else They were engaged, you see, and her mother was with her, so they went through with it Must have been six or seven years ago She's probably got three or four children by this time

MARY (all this is very natural and sincere, no comedy on the part of the people involved. they are both solemn, being drunk) No

JOE (his voice higher-pitched, as though he were growing a little alarmed) Midge Laune? (MARY shakes her head) My initials are J T

MARY Are you still in love with her?

MARY (pause) John?

JOE Well—no To tell you the truth, I'm not sure I guess I am I didn't

JOE No (Pause) Martha Lancaster?

even know she was engaged until a couple of days before they got married. I thought I was going to marry her. I kept thinking all the time about the kind of kids we would be likely to have. My favorite was the third one. The first two were fine. Handsome and fine and intelligent, but that third one was different. Dumb and goofy-looking. I liked him a lot. When she told me she was going to be married, I didn't feel so bad about the first two, it was that dumb one.

MARY (*after a pause of some few seconds*) What do you do?

JOE Do? To tell you the truth, nothing.

MARY Do you always drink a great deal?

JOE (*scientifically*) Not *always*. Only when I'm awake. I sleep seven or eight hours every night, you know.

MARY How nice. I mean to drink when you're awake.

JOE (*thoughtfully*) It's a privilege.

MARY Do you really *like* to drink?

JOE (*positively*) As much as I like to breathe.

MARY (*beautifully*) Why?

JOE (*dramatically*) Why do I like to drink? (*Pause*) Because I don't like to be gyped. Because I don't like to be dead most of the time and just a little alive every once in a long while. (*Pause*) If I don't drink, I become fascinated by unimportant things—like everybody else. I get busy. Do things. All kinds of little

stupid things, for all kinds of little stupid reasons. Proud, selfish, ordinary things. I've done them. Now I don't do anything. I live all the time. Then I go to sleep. (*Pause*)

MARY Do you sleep well?

JOE (*taking it for granted*) Of course.

MARY (*quietly, almost with tenderness*) What are your plans?

JOE (*loudly, but also tenderly*) Plans? I haven't got any. I just get up.

MARY (*beginning to understand everything*) Oh, yes. Yes, of course. (*DUDLEY puts a nickel in the phonograph*)

JOE (*thoughtfully*) Why do I drink? (*Pause, while he thinks about it. The thinking appears to be profound and complex, and has the effect of giving his face a very comical and naive expression*) That question calls for a pretty complicated answer. (*He smiles abstractly*)

MARY Oh, I didn't mean—

JOE (*swiftly, gallantly*) No. No. I insist. I know why. It's just a matter of finding words. Little ones.

MARY. It really doesn't matter.

JOE (*seriously*) Oh, yes, it does. (*Clinically*) Now, why do I drink? (*Scientifically*) No. Why does anybody drink? (*Working it out*) Every day has twenty-four hours.

MARY (*sadly, but brightly*) Yes, that's true.

JOE Twenty-four hours Out of the twenty-four hours at *least* twenty-three and a half are—my God, I don't know why—dull, dead, boring, empty, and murderous Minutes on the clock, *not time of living* It doesn't make any difference who you are or what you do, twenty-three and a half hours of the twenty-four are spent *waiting*

MARY Waiting?

JOE (*gesturing, loudly*) And the more you wait, the less there is to wait *for*

MARY (*attentively, beautifully his student*) Oh?

JOE (*continuing*) That goes on for days and days, and weeks and months and years, and years, and the first thing you know *all* the years are dead All the minutes are dead You yourself are dead There's nothing to wait for any more Nothing except *minutes* on the clock No time of life Nothing but minutes, and idiocy Beautiful, bright, intelligent idiocy (*Pause*) Does that answer your question?

MARY (*earnestly*) I'm afraid it does Thank you You shouldn't have gone to all the trouble

JOE No trouble at all (*Pause*) You have children?

MARY Yes Two A son and a daughter

JOE (*delighted*) How swell Do they look like you?

MARY Yes

JOE Then why are you sad?

MARY I was always sad It's just that after I was married I was allowed to drink

JOE (*eagerly*) Who are you waiting for?

MARY No one

JOE (*smiling*) I'm not waiting for anybody, either

MARY My husband, of course

JOE Oh, sure

MARY He's a lawyer

JOE (*standing, leaning on the table*) He's a great guy I like him I'm very fond of him

MARY (*listening*) You have responsibilities?

JOE (*loudly*) One, and thousands As a matter of fact, I feel responsible to everybody At least to everybody I meet I've been trying for three years to find out if it's possible to live what I think is a civilized life I mean a life that can't hurt any other life

MARY You're famous?

JOE Very Utterly unknown, but very famous Would you like to dance?

MARY All right

JOE (*loudly*) I'm sorry I don't dance I didn't think you'd like to

MARY To tell you the truth, I don't like to dance at all

JOE (*proudly—commentator*) I can hardly walk

MARY You mean you're tight?

JOE (*smiling*) No I mean *all* the time

MARY (*looking at him closely*) Were you ever in Paris?

JOE In 1929, and again in 1934

MARY What month of 1934?

JOE Most of April, all of May, and a little of June

MARY I was there in November and December that year

JOE We were there almost at the same time You were married?

MARY Engaged (*They are silent a moment, looking at one another Quietly and with great charm*) Are you really in love with me?

JOE Yes

MARY Is it the champagne?

JOE Yes Partly, at least (*He sits down*)

MARY If you don't see me again, will you be very unhappy?

JOE Very

MARY (*getting up*) I'm so pleased (*JOE is deeply grieved that she is going In fact, he is almost panic-stricken about it, getting up in a way that is full of furious sorrow and regret*) I must go now Please don't get up (*JOE is up, staring at her with amazement*) Good-by

JOE (*simply*) Good-by (*The WOMAN stands looking at him a moment, then turns and goes JOE stands staring after her for a long time Just as he is slowly sitting down again, the NEWSBOY enters, and goes to JOE's table*)

NEWSBOY Paper, Mister?

JOE How many you got this time?

NEWSBOY Eleven (*JOE buys them all, looks at the lousy headlines, throws them away The NEWSBOY looks at JOE, amazed He walks over to NICK at the bar*)

NEWSBOY (*troubled*) Hey, Mister, do you own this place?

NICK (*casually but emphatically*) I own this place

NEWSBOY Can you use a great lyric tenor?

NICK (*almost to himself*) Great lyric tenor? (*Loudly*) Who?

NEWSBOY (*loud and the least bit angry*) Me I'm getting too big to sell papers I don't want to holler headlines all the time I want to sing You can use a great lyric tenor, can't you?

NICK What's lyric about you?

NEWSBOY (*voice high-pitched, confused*) My voice

NICK Oh (*Slight pause, giving in*) All right, then—sing! (*The NEWSBOY breaks into swift and beautiful song "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling" NICK and JOE listen carefully. NICK with wonder, JOE with amazement and delight*)

NEWSBOY (*singing*)

When Irish eyes are smiling,
Sure 'tis like a morn in Spring
In the lilt of Irish laughter,
You can hear the angels sing
When Irish hearts are happy,
All the world seems bright and gay
But when Irish eyes are smiling—

NICK (*loudly, swiftly*) Are you Irish?

NEWSBOY (*speaking swiftly, loudly, a little impatient with the irrelevant question*) No I'm Greek (He finishes the song, singing louder than ever) Sure they steal your heart away (He turns to NICK dramatically, like a vaudeville singer begging his audience for applause NICK studies the BOY eagerly JOE gets to his feet and leans toward the BOY and NICK)

NICK Not bad Let me hear you again about a year from now

NEWSBOY (*thrilled*) Honest?

NICK Yeah Along about November 7th, 1940

NEWSBOY (*happier than ever before in his life, running over to JOE*) Did you hear it too, Mister?

JOE Yes, and it's great What part of Greece?

NEWSBOY Salonica Gosh, Mister Thanks

JOE Don't wait a year Come back with some papers a little later You're a great singer

NEWSBOY (*thrilled and excited*) Aw, thanks, Mister So long (*Running, to NICK*) Thanks Mister (*He runs*

out JOE and NICK look at the swinging doors JOE sits down NICK laughs)

NICK Joe, people are so wonderful Look at that kid

JOE Of course they're wonderful Every one of them is wonderful (MC CARTHY and KRUPP come in, talking MC CARTHY is a big man in work clothes, which make him seem very young He is wearing black jeans, and a blue workman's shirt No tie No hat He has broad shoulders, a lean intelligent face, thick black hair In his right back pocket is the longshoreman's hook His arms are long and hairy His sleeves are rolled up to just below his elbows He is a casual man, easy-going in movement, sharp in perception, swift in appreciation of charm or innocence or comedy, and gentle in spirit His speech is clear and full of warmth His voice is powerful, but modulated He enjoys the world, in spite of the mess it is, and he is fond of people, in spite of the mess they are KRUPP is not quite as tall or broad-shouldered as MC CARTHY He is physically encumbered by his uniform, club, pistol, belt, and cap And he is plainly not at home in the role of policeman His movement is stiff and unintentionally pompous He is a naive man, essentially good His understanding is less than MC CARTHY's, but he is honest and he doesn't try to bluff)

KRUPP You don't understand what I mean Hi-ya, Joe

JOE Hello, Krupp

MC CARTHY Hi-ya, Joe

JOE Hello, McCarthy

KRUPP Two beers, Nick (To MC CARTHY) All I do is carry out orders, carry out orders I don't know what the idea is behind the order Who it's for, or who it's against, or why All I do is carry it out (NICK gives them beer)

MC CARTHY You don't read enough

KRUPP I do read I read The Examiner every morning The Call-Bulletin every night

MC CARTHY And carry out orders What are the orders now?

KRUPP To keep the peace down here on the waterfront

MC CARTHY Keep it for who? (To JOE) Right?

JOE (*sorrowfully*) Right

KRUPP How do I know for who? The peace Just keep it

MC CARTHY It's got to be kept for somebody Who would you suspect it's kept for?

KRUPP For citizens!

MC CARTHY I'm a citizen!

KRUPP All right, I'm keeping it for you

MC CARTHY By hitting me over the head with a club? (To JOE) Right?

JOE (*melancholy, with remembrance*) I don't know

KRUPP Mac, you know I never hit you over the head with a club

MC CARTHY But you will if you're on duty at the time and happen to stand on the opposite side of myself, on duty

KRUPP We went to Mission High together We were always good friends The only time we ever fought was that time over Alma Hagerty Did you marry Alma Hagerty? (To JOE) Right?

JOE Everything's right

MC CARTHY No Did you? (To JOE) Joe, are you with me or against me?

JOE I'm with everybody One at a time

KRUPP No And that's just what I mean

MC CARTHY You mean neither one of us is going to marry the thing we're fighting for?

KRUPP I don't even know what it is

MC CARTHY You don't read enough, I tell you

KRUPP Mac, you don't know what you're fighting for, either

MC CARTHY It's so simple, it's fantastic

KRUPP All right, what are you fighting for?

MC CARTHY For the rights of the inferior Right?

JOE Something like that

KRUPP The who?

MC CARTHY The inferior The world full of Mahoneys who haven't got what it takes to make monkeys out of everybody else, near by The men who were created equal Remember?

KRUPP Mac, you're not inferior

MC CARTHY I'm a longshoreman And an idealist I'm a man with too much brawn to be an intellectual, exclusively I married a small, sensitive, cultured woman so that my kids would be sissies instead of suckers A strong man with any sensibility has no choice in this world but to be a heel, or a worker I haven't the heart to be a heel, so I'm a worker I've got a son in high school who's already thinking of being a writer

KRUPP I wanted to be a writer once

JOE Wonderful (*He puts down the paper, looks at KRUPP and MC CARTHY*)

MC CARTHY They all wanted to be writers Every maniac in the world that ever brought about the murder of people through war started out in an attic or a basement writing poetry It stank So they got even by becoming important heels And it's still going on

KRUPP Is it really, Joe?

JOE Look at today's paper

MC CARTHY Right now on Telegraph Hill is some punk who is trying to be Shakespeare Ten years from now he'll be a senator Or a communist

KRUPP Somebody ought to do something about it

MC CARTHY (*mischievously, with laughter in his voice*) The thing to do is to have more magazines Hundreds of them *Thousands* Print everything they write, so they'll believe they're immortal That way keep them from going haywire

KRUPP Mac, you ought to be a writer yourself

MC CARTHY I hate the tribe They're mischief-makers Right?

JOE (*swiftly*) Everything's right Right and wrong

KRUPP Then why do you read?

MC CARTHY (*laughing*) It's relaxing It's soothing (*Pause*) The louisiest people born into the world are writers Language is all right It's the people who use language that are lousy (*The ARAB has moved a little closer, and is listening carefully To the ARAB*) What do you think, Brother?

ARAB (*after making many faces, thinking very deeply*) No foundation All the way down the line What What-not Nothing I go walk and look at sky (*He goes*)

KRUPP What? What-not? (*To JOE*) What's that mean?

JOE (*slowly, thinking, remembering*) What? What-not? That means this side, that side Inhale, exhale What birth What-not death The inevitable, the astounding, the magnificent seed of growth and decay in all things Beginning, and end That man, in his own way, is a prophet He is one who, with the help of beer, is able to reach that state of deep understanding in which what and

what-not, the reasonable and the unreasonable, are *one*

MC CARTHY Right

KRUPP If you can understand that kind of talk, how can you be a long-shoreman?

MC CARTHY I come from a long line of McCarthys who never married or slept with anything but the most powerful and quarrelsome flesh (*He drinks beer*)

KRUPP I could listen to you two guys for hours, but I'll be damned if I know what the hell you're talking about

MC CARTHY The consequence is that all the McCarthys are too great and too strong to be heroes. Only the weak and unsure perform the heroic. They've got to. The more heroes you have, the worse the history of the world becomes. Right?

JOE Go outside and look at it

KRUPP You sure can philos—philosoph— Boy, you can talk

MC CARTHY I wouldn't talk this way to anyone but a man in uniform, and a man who couldn't understand a word of what I was saying. The party I'm speaking of, my friend, is *YOU*. (*The phone rings. HARRY gets up from his table suddenly and begins a new dance.*)

KRUPP (*noticing him, with great authority*) Here. Here. What do you think you're doing?

HARRY (*stopping*) I just got an idea for a new dance. I'm trying it out. Nick. Nick, the phone's ringing.

KRUPP (*to MC CARTHY*) Has he got a right to do that?

MC CARTHY The living have danced from the beginning of time. I might even say, the dance and the life have moved along together, until now we have— (*To HARRY*) Go into your dance, son, and show us what we have.

HARRY I haven't got it worked out completely yet, but it starts out like this (*He dances*)

NICK (*on phone*) Nick's Pacific Street Restaurant, Saloon, and Entertainment Palace. Good afternoon. Nick speaking. (*Listens*) Who? (*Turns around*) Is there a Dudley Bostwick in the joint? (*DUDLEY jumps to his feet and goes to phone*)

DUDLEY (*on phone*) Hello Elsie? (*Listens*) You're coming down? (*Elated. To the saloon*) She's coming down. (*Pause*) No. I won't drink. Aw, gosh, Elsie. (*He hangs up, looks about him strangely, as if he were just born, walks around touching things, putting chairs in place, and so on*)

MC CARTHY (*to HARRY*) Splendid. Splendid.

HARRY Then I go into this little routine. (*He demonstrates*)

KRUPP Is that good, Mac?

MC CARTHY It's awful, but it's honest and ambitious, like everything else in this great country.

HARRY Then I work along into this. (*He demonstrates*) And this is where I really get going. (*He finishes the dance*)

MC CARTHY Excellent. A most satisfying demonstration of the present state of the American body and soul Son, you're a genius

HARRY (*delighted, shaking hands with MC CARTHY*) I go on in front of an audience for the first time in my life tonight

MC CARTHY They'll be delighted Where'd you learn to dance?

HARRY Never took a lesson in my life I'm a natural-born dancer And comedian, too

MC CARTHY (*astounded*) You can make people laugh?

HARRY (*dumbly*) I can be funny, but they won't laugh

MC CARTHY That's odd Why not?

HARRY I don't know They just won't laugh

MC CARTHY Would you care to be funny now?

HARRY I'd like to try out a new monologue I've been thinking about

MC CARTHY Please do I promise you if it's funny I shall roar with laughter

HARRY This is it (*Goes into the act, with much energy*) I'm up at Sharkey's on Turk Street It's a quarter to nine, daylight saving Wednesday, the eleventh What I've got is a headache and a 1918 nickel What I want is a cup of coffee If I buy a cup of coffee with the nickel, I've got to walk home I've got an eight-ball problem George the Greek is shooting a game of snooker with Pedro

the Filipino I'm in rags They're wearing thirty-five dollar suits, made to order I haven't got a cigarette They're smoking Bobby Burns panatelas I'm thinking it over, like I always do George the Greek is in a tough spot If I buy a cup of coffee, I'll want another cup What happens? My ear aches! My ear George the Greek takes the cue Chalks it Studies the table Touches the cue-ball delicately Tick What happens? He makes the three-ball! What do I do? I get confused I go out and buy a morning paper What the hell do I want with a morning paper? What I want is a cup of coffee, and a good used car I go out and buy a morning paper Thursday, the twelfth Maybe the headline's about me I take a quick look No The headline is not about me It's about Hitler Seven thousand miles away I'm here Who the hell is Hitler? Who's behind the eight-ball? I turn around *Everybody's behind the eight-ball!* (*Pause KRUPP moves toward HARRY as if to make an important arrest HARRY moves to the swinging doors MC CARTHY stops KRUPP*)

MC CARTHY (*to HARRY*) It's the funniest thing I've ever heard Or *seen*, for that matter

HARRY (*coming back to MC CARTHY*) Then, why don't you laugh?

MC CARTHY I don't know, yet.

HARRY I'm always getting funny ideas that nobody will laugh at

MC CARTHY (*thoughtfully*) It may be that you've stumbled headlong into a new kind of comedy

HARRY Well, what good is it if it doesn't make anybody laugh?

MC CARTHY There are *kinds* of laughter, son I must say, in all truth, that I *am* laughing, although not *out loud*

HARRY I want to *hear* people laugh *Out loud* That's why I keep thinking of funny things to say

MC CARTHY Well They may catch on in time Let's go, Krupp So long, Joe (MC CARTHY and KRUPP go)

JOE So long (After a moment's pause) Hey, Nick

NICK Yeah

JOE Bet McCarthy in the last race

NICK You're crazy That horse is a double-crossing, no-good—

JOE Bet everything you've got on McCarthy

NICK I'm not betting a nickel on him You bet everything you've got on McCarthy

JOE I don't need money

NICK What makes you think McCarthy's going to win?

JOE McCarthy's name's McCarthy, isn't it?

NICK Yeah So what?

JOE The *horse* named McCarthy is going to win, *that's all* Today

NICK Why?

JOE You do what I tell you, and everything will be all right

NICK McCarthy likes to talk, *that's all* (Pause) Where's Tom?

JOE He'll be around He'll be miserable, but he'll be around Five or ten minutes more

NICK You don't believe that Kitty, do you? About being in burlesque?

JOE (*very clearly*) I believe dreams sooner than statistics

NICK (*remembering*) She sure is somebody Called me a dentist (TOM, turning about, confused, troubled, comes in, and hurries to JOE's table)

JOE What's the matter?

TOM Here's your five, Joe I'm in trouble again

JOE If it's not organic, it'll cure itself If it is organic, science will cure it What is it, organic or non-organic?

TOM Joe, I don't know— (*He seems to be completely broken down*)

JOE What's eating you? I want you to go on an errand for me

TOM It's Kitty

JOE What about her?

TOM She's up in her room, crying

JOE Crying?

TOM Yeah, she's been crying for over an hour I been talking to her all this time, but she won't stop

JOE What's she crying about?

TOM I don't know I couldn't understand anything She kept crying and telling me about a big house and colie dogs all around and flowers and

one of her brothers dead and the other one lost somewhere Joe, I can't stand Kitty crying

JOE You want to marry the girl?

TOM (*nodding*) Yeah

JOE (*curious and sincere*) Why?

TOM I don't know why, exactly, Joe (*Pause*) Joe, I don't like to think of Kitty out in the streets I guess I love her, that's all

JOE She's a nice girl

TOM She's like an angel She's not like those other street-walkers

JOE (*swiftly*) Here Take all this money and run next door to Frankie's and bet it on the nose of McCarthy

TOM (*swiftly*) All this money, Joe? McCarthy?

JOE Yeah Hurry

TOM (*going*) Ah, Joe If McCarthy wins we'll be rich

JOE Get going, will you?
(*TOM runs out and nearly knocks over the ARAB coming back in NICK fills him a beer without a word*)

ARAB No foundation, anywhere
Whole world No foundation All
the way down the line

NICK (*angry*) McCarthy! Just because you got a little lucky this morning, you have to go to work and throw away eighty bucks

JOE He wants to marry her

NICK Suppose she doesn't want to marry him?

JOE (*amazed*) Oh, yeah. (*Thinking*) Now, why wouldn't she want to marry a nice guy like Tom?

NICK She's been in burlesque She's had flowers sent to her by European royalty She's dined with young men of quality and social position She's above Tom
(*TOM comes running in*)

TOM (*disgusted*) They were running when I got there Frankie wouldn't take the bet McCarthy didn't get a call till the stretch I thought we were going to save all this money Then McCarthy won by two lengths

JOE What'd he pay, fifteen to one?

TOM Better, but Frankie wouldn't take the bet

NICK (*throwing a dish towel across the room*) Well, for the love of Mike

JOE Give me the money

TOM (*giving back the money*) We would have had about a thousand five hundred dollars

JOE (*bored, casually, inventing*) Go up to Schwabacher-Frey and get me the biggest Rand-McNally map of the nations of Europe they've got On your way back stop at one of the pawn shops on Third Street, and buy me a good revolver and some cartridges

TOM She's up in her room crying, Joe

JOE Go get me those things

NICK What are you going to do study the map, and then go out and shoot somebody?

JOE I want to read the names of some European towns and rivers and valleys and mountains

NICK What do you want with the revolver?

JOE I want to study it I'm interested in things Here's twenty dollars, Tom Now go get them things

TOM A big map of Europe And a revolver

JOE Get a good one Tell the man you don't know anything about fire-arms and you're trusting him not to fool you Don't pay more than ten dollars

TOM Joe, you got something on your mind Don't go fool with a revolver

JOE Be sure it's a good one

TOM Joe

JOE (*irritated*) What, Tom?

TOM Joe, what do you send me out for crazy things for all the time?

JOE (*angry*) They're not crazy, Tom Now, get going

TOM What about Kitty, Joe?

JOE Let her cry It'll do her good

TOM If she comes in here while I'm gone, talk to her, will you, Joe? Tell her about me

JOE O K Get going Don't load that gun Just buy it and bring it here

TOM (*going*) You won't catch me loading any gun.

JOE Wait a minute Take these toys away

TOM Where'll I take them?

JOE Give them to some kid (*Pause*) No Take them up to Kitty Toys stopped me from crying once That's the reason I had you buy them I wanted to see if I could find out *why* they stopped me from crying I remember they seemed awfully stupid at the time

TOM Shall I, Joe? Take them up to Kitty? Do you think they'd stop *her* from crying?

JOE They might You get curious about the way they work and you forget whatever it is you're remembering that's making you cry That's what they're for

TOM Yeah Sure The girl at the store asked me what I wanted with toys I'll take them up to Kitty (*Tragically*) She's like a little girl (*He goes*)

WESLEY Mr Nick, can I play the piano again?

NICK Sure Practice all you like—until I tell you to stop

WESLEY You going to pay me for playing the piano?

NICK Sure I'll give you enough to get by on

WESLEY (*amazed and delighted*) Get money for playing the piano? (*He goes to the piano and begins to play quietly HARRY goes up on the little stage and listens to the music After a while he begins a soft-shoe dance*)

NICK What were you crying about?

JOE My mother

NICK What about her?

JOE She was dead I stopped crying when they gave me the toys
(NICK'S MOTHER, a little old woman of sixty or so, dressed plainly in black, her face shining, comes in briskly, chattering loudly in Italian, gesturing NICK is delighted to see her)

NICK'S MOTHER (in Italian) Everything all right, Nickie?

NICK (in Italian) Sure, Mamma
(NICK'S MOTHER leaves as gaily and as noisily as she came, after half a minute of loud Italian family talk)

JOE Who was that?

NICK (to JOE, proudly and a little sadly) My mother (Still looking at the swinging doors)

JOE What'd she say?

NICK Nothing Just wanted to see me (Pause) What do you want with that gun?

JOE I study things, Nick
(An old man who looks as if he might have been Kit Carson at one time walks in importantly, moves about, and finally stands at JOE's table)

KIT CARSON Murphy's the name just an old trapper Mind if I sit down?

JOE Be delighted What'll you drink?

KIT CARSON (sitting down) Beer Same as I've been drinking And thanks

JOE (to NICK) Glass of beer, Nick.
(NICK brings the beer to the table, KIT CARSON swallows it in one swig, wipes his big white mustache with the back of his right hand)

KIT CARSON (moving in) I don't suppose you ever fell in love with a midget weighing thirty-nine pounds?

JOE (studying the man) Can't say I have, but have another beer

KIT CARSON (intimately) Thanks, thanks Down in Gallup, twenty years ago Fellow by the name of Rufus Jenkins came to town with six white horses and two black ones Said he wanted a man to break the horses for him because his left leg was wood and he couldn't do it Had a meeting at Parker's Mercantile Store and finally came to blows, me and Henry Walpal Bashed his head with a brass cuspidor and ran away to Mexico, but he didn't die Couldn't speak a word Took up with a cattle-breeder named Diego, educated in California Spoke the language better than you and me Said, Your job, Murph, is to feed them prize bulls I said, Fine, what'll I feed them? He said, Hay, lettuce, salt, beer, and aspirin Came to blows two days later over an accordion he claimed I stole I had borrowed it During the fight I busted it over his head, ruined one of the finest accordions I ever saw Grabbed a horse and rode back across the border Texas Got to talking with a fellow who looked honest Turned out to be a Ranger who was looking for me

JOE Yeah You were saying, a thirty-nine-pound midget

KIT CARSON Will I ever forget that lady? Will I ever get over that amazon of small proportions?

JOE Will you?

KIT CARSON If I live to be sixty

JOE Sixty? You look more than sixty now

KIT CARSON That's trouble showing in my face Trouble and complications I was fifty-eight three months ago

JOE That accounts for it, then Go ahead, tell me more

KIT CARSON. Told the Texas Ranger my name was Rothstein, mining engineer from Pennsylvania, looking for something worth while Mentioned two places in Houston Nearly lost an eye early one morning, going down the stairs Ran into a six-footer with an iron claw where his right hand was supposed to be Said, You broke up my home Told him I was a stranger in Houston The girls gathered at the top of the stairs to see a fight Seven of them Six feet and an iron claw That's bad on the nerves Kicked him in the mouth when he swung for my head with the claw Would have lost an eye except for quick thinking He rolled into the gutter and pulled a gun Fired seven times I was back upstairs Left the place an hour later, dressed in silk and feathers, with a hat swung around over my face Saw him standing on the corner, waiting Said, Care for a wiggle? Said he didn't I went on down the street and left town I don't suppose you ever had to put a dress on to save your skin, did you?

JOE No, and I never fell in love with a midget weighing thirty-nine pounds Have another beer?

KIT CARSON Thanks (*Swallows glass of beer*) Ever try to herd cattle on a bicycle?

JOE No I never got around to that

KIT CARSON Left Houston with sixty cents in my pocket, gift of a girl named Lucinda Walked fourteen miles in fourteen hours Big house with barb-wire all around, and big dogs One thing I never could get around Walked past the gate, anyway, from hunger and thirst Dogs jumped up and came for me Walked right into them, growing older every second Went up to the door and knocked Big negress opened the door, closed it quick Said, On your way, white trash

Knocked again Said, On your way Again On your way Again This time the old man himself opened the door, ninety, if he was a day Sawed-off shotgun, too

Said, I ain't looking for trouble, Father I'm hungry and thirsty, name's Cavanaugh

Took me in and made raint juleps for the two of us

Said, Living here alone, Father?

Said, Drink and ask no questions Maybe I am and maybe I ain't You saw the lady Draw your own conclusions

I'd heard of that, but didn't wink out of tact If I told you that old Southern gentleman was my grandfather, you wouldn't believe me, would you?

JOE I might

KIT CARSON Well, it so happens he wasn't Would have been romantic if he had been, though

JOE Where did you herd cattle on a bicycle?

KIT CARSON Toledo, Ohio, 1918

JOE Toledo, Ohio? They don't herd cattle in Toledo

KIT CARSON They don't anymore. They did in 1918. One fellow did, leastways. Bookkeeper named Sam Gold. Straight from the East Side, New York. Sombrero, lanats, Bull Durham, two head of cattle and two bicycles. Called his place The Gold Bar Ranch, two acres, just outside the city limits.

That was the year of the War, you'll remember.

JOE Yeah, I remember, but how about herding them two cows on a bicycle? How'd you do it?

KIT CARSON Easiest thing in the world. Rode no hands. Had to, otherwise couldn't lasso the cows. Worked for Sam Gold till the cows ran away. Bicycles scared them. They went into Toledo. Never saw hide nor hair of them again. Advertised in every paper, but never got them back. Broke his heart. Sold both bikes and returned to New York.

Took four aces from a deck of red cards and walked to town. Poker. Fellow in the game named Chuck Collins, liked to gamble. Told him with a smile I didn't suppose he'd care to bet a hundred dollars I wouldn't hold four aces the next hand. Called it. My cards were red on the blank side. The other cards were blue. Plumb forgot all about it. Showed him four aces. Ace of spades, ace of clubs, ace of diamonds, ace of hearts. I'll remember them four cards if I live to be sixty. Would have been killed on the spot except for the hurricane that year.

JOE Hurricane?

KIT CARSON You haven't forgotten the Toledo hurricane of 1918, have you?

JOE No. There was no hurricane in Toledo in 1918, or any other year.

KIT CARSON For the love of God, then what do you suppose that commotion was? And how come I came to in Chicago, dream-walking down State Street?

JOE I guess they scared you.

KIT CARSON No, that wasn't it. You go back to the papers of November 1918, and I think you'll find there was a hurricane in Toledo. I remember sitting on the roof of a two-story house, floating northwest.

JOE (*seriously*) Northwest?

KIT CARSON Now, son, don't tell me you don't believe me, either?

JOE (*pause. Very seriously, energetically and sharply*) Of course I believe you. Living is an art. It's not bookkeeping. It takes a lot of rehearsing for a man to get to be himself.

KIT CARSON (*thoughtfully, smiling, and amazed*) You're the first man I've ever met who believes me.

JOE (*seriously*) Have another beer. (*TOM comes in with the Rand McNally book, the revolver, and the box of cartridges. KIT goes to bar.*)

JOE (*to TOM*) Did you give her the toys?

TOM Yeah, I gave them to her.

JOE Did she stop crying?

TOM No. She started crying harder than ever.

JOE. That's funny I wonder why.

JOE What kind of a room is it?

TOM Joe, if I was a minute earlier, Frankie would have taken the bet and now we'd have about a thousand five hundred dollars. How much of it would you have given me, Joe?

TOM It's little. It crowds you in. It's bad, Joe. Kitty don't belong in a place like that.

JOE You want to take her away from there?

JOE If she'd marry you—all of it.

TOM Would you, Joe?

TOM Yeah. I want her to live in a house where there's room enough to live. Kitty ought to have a garden, or something.

JOE (*opening packages, examining book first, and revolver next*) Sure. In this realm there's only one subject, and you're it. It's my duty to see that my subject is happy.

JOE You want to take care of her?

TOM Joe, do you think we'll ever have eighty dollars for a race sometime again when there's a fifteen-to-one shot that we like, weather good, track fast, they get off to a good start, our horse doesn't get a call till the stretch, we think we're going to lose all that money, and then it wins, by a nose?

TOM Yeah, sure, Joe. I ought to take care of somebody good that makes me feel like I'm somebody.

JOE I didn't quite get that.

JOE That means you'll have to get a job. What can you do?

TOM You know what I mean.

TOM I finished high school, but I don't know what I can do.

JOE You mean the impossible. No, Tom, we won't. We were just a little late, that's all.

JOE Sometimes when you think about it, what do you think you'd like to do?

TOM We might, Joe.

TOM Just sit around like you, Joe, and have somebody run errands for me and drink champagne and take things easy and never be broke and never worry about money.

JOE It's not likely.

JOE That's a noble ambition.

TOM Then how am I ever going to make enough money to marry her?

NICK (*to JOE*) How do you do it?

JOE I don't know, Tom. Maybe you aren't.

JOE I really don't know, but I think you've got to have the full co-operation of the Good Lord.

TOM Joe, I got to marry Kitty (*Shaking his head*). You ought to see the crazy room she lives in.

NICK I can't understand the way you talk.

TOM Joe, shall I go back and see if I can get her to stop crying?

JOE Give me a hand and I'll go with you

TOM (*amazed*) What! You're going to get up already?

JOE She's crying, isn't she?

TOM She's crying Worse than ever now

JOE I thought the toys would stop her

TOM I've seen you sit in one place from four in the morning till two the next morning

JOE At my best, Tom, I don't travel by foot That's all Come on Give me a hand I'll find some way to stop her from crying

TOM (*helping JOE*) Joe, I never did tell you You're a different kind of a guy

JOE (*swiftly, a little angry*) Don't be silly I don't understand things I'm trying to understand them
(*JOE is a little drunk They go out together The lights go down slowly, while WESLEY plays the piano, and come up slowly on*)

ACT THREE

A cheap bed in NICK's to indicate room 21 of The New York Hotel, upstairs, around the corner from NICK's The bed can be at the center of NICK's, or up on the little stage Everything in NICK's is the same, except that all the people are silent, immobile and in darkness, except WESLEY who is playing the piano softly and sadly KITTY DUVAL, in a dress she has carried around with her from the early days in Ohio, is seated on the bed, tying a ribbon in her hair She looks at herself in a hand mirror She is deeply grieved at the change she sees in herself She takes off the ribbon, angry and hurt She lifts a book from the bed and tries to read She begins to sob again She picks up an old picture of herself and looks at it Sobs harder than ever, falling on the bed and burying her face There is a knock, as if at the door

KITTY (*sobbing*) Who is it?

TOM'S VOICE Kitty, it's me Tom Me and Joe

(*JOE, followed by TOM, comes to the bed quietly JOE is holding a rather large toy carousel JOE studies KITTY a moment He sets the toy carousel on the floor, at the foot of KITTY's bed*)

TOM (*standing over KITTY and bending down close to her*) Don't cry any more, Kitty

KITTY (*not looking, sobbing*) I don't like this life

(*JOE starts the carousel which makes a strange, sorrowful, tinkling music The music begins slowly, becomes swift, gradually slows down, and ends JOE himself is interested in the toy, watches and listens to it carefully*)

TOM (*eagerly*) Kitty Joe got up from his chair at Nick's just to get you a toy and come here This one

makes music We rode all over town in a cab to get it Listen

(KITTY sits up slowly, listening, while TOM watches her Everything happens slowly and somberly KITTY notices the photograph of herself when she was a little girl Lifts it, and looks at it again)

TOM (looking) Who's that little girl, Kitty?

KITTY That's me When I was seven

TOM (looking, smiling) Gee, you're pretty, Kitty

(JOE reaches up for the photograph, which TOM hands to him TOM returns to KITTY whom he finds as pretty now as she was at seven JOE studies the photograph KITTY looks up at TOM There is no doubt that they really love one another JOE looks up at them)

KITTY Tom?

TOM (eagerly) Yeah, Kitty

KITTY Tom, when you were a little boy what did you want to be?

TOM (a little bewildered, but eager to please her) What, Kitty?

KITTY Do you remember when you were a little boy?

TOM (thoughtfully) Yeah, I remember sometimes, Kitty

KITTY What did you want to be?

TOM (looks at JOE JOE holds TOM's eyes a moment Then TOM is able to speak) Sometimes I wanted to be a locomotive engineer. Sometimes I wanted to be a policeman

KITTY I wanted to be a great actress (She looks up into TOM's face) Tom, didn't you ever want to be a doctor?

TOM (looks at JOE JOE holds TOM's eyes again, encouraging TOM by his serious expression to go on talking). Yeah, now I remember Sure, Kitty I wanted to be a doctor—once

KITTY (smiling sadly) I'm so glad Because I wanted to be an actress and have a young doctor come to the theater and see me and fall in love with me and send me flowers (JOE pantomimes to TOM, demanding that he go on talking)

TOM I would do that, Kitty

KITTY I wouldn't know who it was, and then one day I'd see him in the street and fall in love with him I wouldn't know he was the one who was in love with me I'd think about him all the time I'd dream about him I'd dream of being near him the rest of my life I'd dream of having children that looked like him I wouldn't be an actress all the time Only until I found him and fell in love with him After that we'd take a train and go to beautiful cities and see the wonderful people everywhere and give money to the poor and whenever people were sick he'd go to them and make them well again (TOM looks at JOE, bewildered, confused, and full of sorrow KITTY is deep in memory, almost in a trance)

JOE (gently) Talk to her, Tom. Be the wonderful young doctor she dreamed about and never found Go ahead Correct the errors of the world

TOM Joe (Pathetically) I don't know what to say (There is rowdy singing in the hall A loud young VOICE sings "Sailing, sailing, over the bounding main")

VOICE Kitty Oh, Kitty! (KITTY stirs, shocked, coming out of the trance) Where the hell are you? Oh, Kitty (TOM jumps up, furiously)

WOMAN'S VOICE (in the hall) Who are you looking for, Sailor Boy?

VOICE The most beautiful lay in the world

WOMAN'S VOICE Don't go any further

VOICE (with impersonal contempt) You? No Not you Kitty You stink

WOMAN'S VOICE (rasping, angry) Don't you dare talk to me that way You pickpocket

VOICE (still impersonal, but louder) Oh, I see Want to get tough, hey? Close the door Go hide

WOMAN'S VOICE You pickpocket All of you (The door slams)

VOICE (roaring with laughter which is very sad) Oh—Kitty Room 21 Where the hell is that room?

TOM (to JOE) Joe, I'll kill him

KITTY (fully herself again, terribly frightened) Who is it? (She looks long and steadily at TOM and JOE TOM is standing, excited and angry JOE is completely at ease, his expression full of pity KITTY buries her face in the bed)

JOE (gently) Tom Just take him away

VOICE Here it is Number 21 Three naturals Heaven My blue heaven The west, a nest, and you Just Molly

and me (Tragically) Ah, to hell with everything (A young SAILOR, a good-looking boy of no more than twenty or so, who is only drunk and lonely, comes to the bed, singing sadly)

SAILOR Hi-ya, Kitty (Pause) Oh Visitors Sorry A thousand apologies (To KITTY) I'll come back later

TOM (taking him by the shoulders, furiously) If you do, I'll kill you (JOE holds TOM TOM pushes the frightened boy away)

JOE (somerly) Tom You stay here with Kitty I'm going down to Union Square to hire an automobile I'll be back in a few minutes We'll ride out to the ocean and watch the sun go down Then we'll ride down the Great Highway to Half Moon Bay We'll have supper down there, and you and Kitty can dance

TOM (stupefied, unable to express his amazement and gratitude) Joe, you mean you're going to go on an errand for me? You mean you're not going to send me?

JOE That's right (He gestures toward KITTY, indicating that TOM shall talk to her, protect the innocence in her which is in so much danger when TOM isn't near, which TOM loves so deeply JOE leaves TOM studies KITTY, his face becoming childlike and somber He sets the carousel into motion, listens, watching KITTY, who lifts herself slowly, looking only at TOM TOM lifts the turning carousel and moves it slowly toward KITTY, as though the boy were his heart The piano music comes up loudly and the lights go down, while HARRY is heard dancing swiftly)

ACT FOUR

A little later.

WESLEY, the colored boy, is at the piano

HARRY is on the little stage, dancing

NICK is behind the bar

The ARAB is in his place

KIT CARSON is asleep on his folded arms.

The DRUNKARD comes in Goes to the telephone for the nickel that might be in the return-chute NICK comes to take him out He gestures for NICK to hold on a minute Then produces a half dollar NICK goes behind the bar to serve the DRUNKARD whiskey

THE DRUNKARD To the old, God bless them (Another) To the new, God love them (Another) To—children and small animals, like little dogs that don't bite (Another Loudly) To reforestation (Searches for money Finds some) To—President Taft (He goes out The telephone rings)

KIT CARSON (jumping up, fighting) Come on, all of you, if you're looking for trouble I never asked for quarter and I always gave it

NICK (reproachfully) Hey, Kit Carson

DUDLEY (on the phone) Hello Who? Nick? Yes He's here (To NICK) It's for you I think it's important

NICK (going to the phone) Important! What's important?

DUDLEY He sounded like big-shot

NICK Big what? (To WESLEY and HARRY) Hey, you Quiet I want to hear this important stuff (WESLEY

stops playing the piano HARRY stops dancing KIT CARSON comes close to NICK)

KIT CARSON If there's anything I can do, name it I'll do it for you I'm fifty-eight years old, been through three wars, married four times, the father of countless children whose names I don't even know I've got no money I live from hand to mouth But if there's anything I can do, name it I'll do it

NICK (patiently) Listen, Pop For a moment, please sit down and go back to sleep—for me

KIT CARSON I can do that, too (He sits down, folds his arms, and puts his head into them But not for long As NICK begins to talk, he listens carefully, gets to his feet, and then begins to express in pantomime the moods of each of NICK's remarks)

NICK (on phone) Yeah? (Pause) Who? Oh, I see (Listens) Why don't you leave them alone? (Listens) The church-people? Well, to hell

with the church-people I'm a Catholic myself (*LISTENS*) All right I'll send them away I'll tell them to lay low for a couple of days Yeah, I know how it is (*NICK'S daughter ANNA comes in shyly, looking at her father, and stands unnoticed by the piano*) What? (*Very angry*) Listen I don't like that Blick He was here this morning, and I told him not to come back I'll keep the girls out of here You keep Blick out of here (*LISTENS*) I know his brother-in-law is important, but I don't want him to come down here He looks for trouble everywhere, and he always finds it I don't break any laws I've got a dive in the lousiest part of town Five years nobody's been robbed, murdered or gypped I leave people alone Your swanky joints uptown make trouble for you every night (*NICK gesture to WESLEY—keeps listening on the phone—puts his hand over the mouthpiece To WESLEY and HARRY*) Start playing again My ears have got a headache Go into your dance, son (*WESLEY begins to play again HARRY begins to dance NICK, into mouthpiece*) Yeah I'll keep them out Just see that Blick doesn't come around and start something (*Pause*) O K (*He hangs up*)

KIT CARSON Trouble coming?

NICK That lousy Vice Squad again It's that gorilla Blick

KIT CARSON Anybody at all You can count on me What kind of a gorilla is this gorilla Blick?

NICK Very dignified Toenails on his fingers

ANNA (*to KIT CARSON, with great, warm, beautiful pride, pointing at NICK*) That's my father

KIT CARSON (*leaping with amazement at the beautiful voice, the wondrous face, the magnificent event*) Well, bless your heart, child Bless your lovely heart I had a little daughter point me out in a crowd once

NICK (*surprised*) Anna What the hell are you doing here? Get back home where you belong and help Grandma cook me some supper (*ANNA smiles at her father, understanding him, knowing that his words are words of love She turns and goes, looking at him all the way out, as much as to say that she would cook for him the rest of her life NICK stares at the swinging doors KIT CARSON moves toward them, two or three steps ANNA pushes open one of the doors and peeks in, to look at her father again She waves to him Turns and runs NICK is very sad He doesn't know what to do He gets a glass and a bottle Pours himself a drink Swallows some It isn't enough, so he pours more and swallows the whole drink To himself*) My beautiful, beautiful baby Anna, she is you again (*He brings out a handkerchief, touches his eyes, and blows his nose KIT CARSON moves close to NICK, watching NICK's face NICK looks at him Loudly, almost making KIT jump*) You're broke, aren't you?

KIT CARSON Always Always.

NICK All right Go into the kitchen and give Sam a hand Eat some food and when you come back you can have a couple of beers

KIT CARSON (*studying NICK*) Anything at all I know a good man when I see one (*He goes ELSIE MANDELSPIEGEL comes into NICK'S She is a beautiful, dark girl, with a*

sorrowful, wise, dreaming face, almost on the verge of tears, and full of pity There is an aura of dream about her She moves softly and gently, as if everything around her were unreal and pathetic DUDLEY doesn't notice her for a moment or two When he does finally see her, he is so amazed, he can barely move or speak Her presence has the effect of changing him completely He gets up from his chair, as if in a trance, and walks toward her, smiling sadly)

ELSIE (looking at him) Hello, Dudley

DUDLEY (broken-hearted) Elsie

ELSIE I'm sorry (Explaining) So many people are sick Last night a little boy died I love you, but— (She gestures, trying to indicate how hopeless love is They sit down)

DUDLEY (staring at her, stunned and quieted) Elsie You'll never know how glad I am to see you Just to see you (Pathetically) I was afraid I'd never see you again It was driving me crazy I didn't want to live Honest (He shakes his head mournfully, with dumb and beautiful affection TWO STREETWALKERS come in, and pause near DUDLEY, at the bar) I know You told me before, but I can't help it, Elsie I love you

ELSIE (quietly, somberly, gently, with great compassion) I know you love me, and I love you, but don't you see love is impossible in this world?

DUDLEY Maybe it isn't, Elsie

ELSIE Love is for birds They have wings to fly away on when it's time for flying. For tigers in the jungle be-

cause they don't know their end. We know our end Every night I watch over poor, dying men I hear them breathing, crying, talking in their sleep Crying for air and water and love, for mother and field and sunlight We can never know love or greatness We should know both

DUDLEY (deeply moved by her words) Elsie, I love you

ELSIE You want to live I want to live, too, but where? Where can we escape our poor world?

DUDLEY Elsie, we'll find a place

ELSIE (smiling at him) All right We'll try again We'll go together to a room in a cheap hotel, and dream that the world is beautiful, and that living is full of love and greatness But in the morning, can we forget debts, and duties, and the cost of ridiculous things?

DUDLEY (with blind faith) Sure, we can, Elsie

ELSIE All right, Dudley Of course Come on The time for the new pathetic war has come Let's hurry, before they dress you, stand you in line, hand you a gun, and have you kill and be killed (ELSIE looks at him gently, and takes his hand DUDLEY embraces her shyly, as if he might hurt her They go, as if they were a couple of young animals There is a moment of silence One of the STREETWALKERS bursts out laughing)

KILLER Nick, what the hell kind of a joint are you running?

NICK Well, it's not out of the world. It's on a street in a city, and people

come and go They bring whatever they've got with them and they say what they must say

THE OTHER STREETWALKER It's floozies like her that raise hell with our racket

NICK (*remembering*) Oh, yeah Finnegan telephoned

KILLER That mouse in elephant's body?

THE OTHER STREETWALKER What the hell does he want?

NICK Spend your time at the movies for the next couple of days

KILLER They're all lousy (*Mocking*) All about love

NICK Lousy or not lousy, for a couple of days the flat-foots are going to be romancing you, so stay out of here, and lay low

KILLER I always was a pushover for a man in uniform, with a badge, a club and a gun (*KRUPP comes into the place The girls put down their drinks*)

NICK O K, get going (*The girls begin to leave and meet KRUPP*)

THE OTHER STREETWALKER We was just going

KILLER We was formerly models at Magnin's (*They go*)

KRUPP (*at the bar*) The strike isn't enough, so they've got to put us on the tails of the girls, too I don't know I wish to God I was back in the Sunset holding the hands of kids going home from school, where I belong I don't like trouble Give me a beer

(*NICK gives him a beer He drinks some*) Right now, McCarthy, my best friend, is with sixty strikers who want to stop the finks who are going to try to unload the *Mary Luckenbach* tonight Why the hell McCarthy ever became a longshoreman instead of a professor of some kind is something I'll never know

NICK Cowboys and Indians, cops and robbers, longshoremen and finks

KRUPP They're all guys who are trying to be happy, trying to make a living, support a family, bring up children, enjoy sleep Go to a movie, take a drive on Sunday They're all good guys, so out of nowhere comes trouble All they want is a chance to get out of debt and relax in front of a radio while Amos and Andy go through their act What the hell do they always want to make trouble for? I been thinking everything over, Nick, and you know what I think?

NICK No What?

KRUPP I think we're all crazy It came to me while I was on my way to Pier 27 All of a sudden it hit me like a ton of bricks A thing like that never happened to me before Here we are in this wonderful world, full of all the wonderful things—here we are—all of us, and look at us Just look at us We're crazy We're nuts We've got everything, but we always feel lousy and dissatisfied just the same

NICK Of course we're crazy Even so, we've got to go on living together (*He waves at the people in his joint*)

KRUPP There's no hope I don't suppose it's right for an officer of the law to feel the way I feel, but, by God, right or not right, that's how I feel.

Why are we all so lousy? This is a good world. It's wonderful to get up in the morning and go out for a little walk and smell the trees and see the streets and the kids going to school and the clouds in the sky. It's wonderful just to be able to move around and whistle a song if you feel like it, or maybe try to sing one. This is a nice world. So why do they make all the trouble?

NICK I don't know. Why?

KRUPP We're crazy, that's why. We're no good any more. All the corruption everywhere. The poor kids selling themselves. A couple of years ago they were in grammar school. Everybody trying to get a lot of money in a hurry. Everybody betting the horses. Nobody going quietly for a little walk to the ocean. Nobody taking things easy and not wanting to make some kind of a killing. Nick, I'm going to quit being a cop. Let somebody else keep law and order. The stuff I hear about at headquarters. I'm thirty-seven years old, and I still can't get used to it. The only trouble is, the wife'll raise hell.

NICK Ah, the wife.

KRUPP She's a wonderful woman, Nick. We've got two of the swellest boys in the world. Twelve and seven years old. (*The ARAB gets up and moves closer to listen.*)

NICK I didn't know that.

KRUPP Sure. But what'll I do? I've wanted to quit for seven years. I wanted to quit the day they began putting me through the school. I didn't quit. What'll I do if I quit? Where's money going to be coming in from?

NICK That's one of the reasons we're all crazy. We don't know where it's going to be coming in from, except from wherever it happens to be coming in from at the time, which we don't usually like.

KRUPP Every once in a while I catch myself being mean, hating people just because they're down and out, broke and hungry, sick or drunk. And then when I'm with the stuffed shirts at headquarters, all of a sudden I'm nice to them, trying to make an impression. On who? People I don't like. And I feel disgusted. (*With finality.*) I'm going to quit. That's all. Quit. Out. I'm going to give them back the uniform and the gadgets that go with it. I don't want any part of it. This is a good world. What do they want to make all the trouble for all the time?

ARAB (*quietly, gently, with great understanding.*) No foundation. All the way down the line.

KRUPP What?

ARAB No foundation. No foundation.

KRUPP I'll say there's no foundation.

ARAB All the way down the line.

KRUPP (*to NICK.*) Is that all he ever says?

NICK That's all he's been saying this week.

KRUPP What is he, anyway?

NICK He's an Arab, or something like that.

KRUPP No, I mean what's he do for a living?

NICK (to ARAB) What do you do for a living, brother?

ARAB Work Work all my life All my life, work From small boy to old man, work In old country, work In new country, work In New York Pittsburgh Detroit Chicago Imperial Valley San Francisco Work No beg Work For what? Nothing Three boys in old country Twenty years, not see Lost Dead Who knows? What What-not No foundation All the way down the line

KRUPP What'd he say last week?

NICK Didn't say anything Played the harmonica

ARAB Old country song, I play (He brings a harmonica from his back pocket)

KRUPP Seems like a nice guy

NICK Nicest guy in the world

KRUPP (bitterly) But crazy Just like all the rest of us Stark raving mad (WESLEY and HARRY long ago stopped playing and dancing They sat at a table together and talked for a while, then began playing casino or rummy When the ARAB begins his solo on the harmonica, they stop their game to listen)

WESLEY You hear that?

HARRY That's something

WESLEY That's crying That's crying

HARRY I want to make people laugh

WESLEY That's deep, deep crying That's crying a long time ago That's crying a thousand years ago Some place five thousand miles away

HARRY Do you think you can play to that?

WESLEY I want to sing to that, but I can't sing

HARRY You try and play to that I'll try to dance (WESLEY goes to the piano, and after closer listening, he begins to accompany the harmonica solo HARRY goes to the little stage and after a few efforts begins to dance to the song This keeps up quietly for some time KRUPP and NICK have been silent, and deeply moved)

KRUPP (softly) Well, anyhow, Nick

NICK Hmmmmmmmm

KRUPP What I said Forget it

NICK Sure

KRUPP It gets me down once in a while

NICK No harm in talking

KRUPP (The POLICEMAN again, loudly) Keep the girls out of here

NICK (Loud and friendly) Take it easy (The music and dancing are now at their height)

CURTAIN

ACT FIVE

That evening Fog-horns are heard throughout the scene A man in evening clothes and a top hat, and his woman, also in evening clothes, are entering

WILLIE is still at the marble game NICK is behind the bar JOE is at his table, looking at the book of maps of the countries of Europe The box containing the revolver and the box containing the cartridges are on the table, beside his glass He is at peace, his hat tilted back on his head, a calm expression on his face TOM is leaning against the bar, dreaming of love and KITTY The ARAB is gone WESLEY and HARRY are gone KIT CARSON is watching the boy at the marble game

LADY Oh, come on, please (The gentleman follows miserably The SOCIETY MAN and WIFE take a table NICK gives them a menu Outside, in the street, the Salvation Army people are playing a song Big drum, tambourines, cornet and singing They are singing "The Blood of the Lamb" The music and words come into the place faintly and comically This is followed by an old sinner testifying It is the DRUNKARD His words are not intelligible, but his message is unmistakable He is saved He wants to sin no more And so on)

DRUNKARD (testifying, unmistakably drunk) Brothers and sisters I was a sinner I chewed tobacco and chased women Oh, I sinned, brothers and sisters And then I was saved Saved by the Salvation Army, God forgive me

JOE Let's see now Here's a city Pribor Czechoslovakia Little, lovely, lonely Czechoslovakia I wonder what kind of a place Pribor was? (Calling) Pribor! Pribor! (TOM leaps)

LADY What's the matter with him?

MAN (crossing his legs, as if he ought to go to the men's room) Drunk

TOM Who you calling, Joe?

JOE Pribor

TOM Who's Pribor?

JOE He's a Czech And a Slav A Czechoslovakian

LADY How interesting

MAN (uncrosses legs) He's drunk

JOE Tom, Pribor's a city in Czechoslovakia

TOM Oh (Pause) You sure were nice to her, Joe

JOE Kitty Duval? She's one of the finest people in the world

TOM It sure was nice of you to hire an automobile and take us for a drive along the ocean front and down to Half Moon Bay

JOE Those three hours were the most delightful, the most somber, and the most beautiful I have ever known

TOM Why, Joe?

JOE Why? I'm a student (*Lifting his voice*) Tom (*Quietly*) I'm a student I study all things All All And when my study reveals something of beauty in a place or in a person where by all rights only ugliness or death should be revealed, then I know how full of goodness this life is And that's a good thing to know That's a truth I shall always seek to verify

LADY Are you *sure* he's drunk?

MAN (*crossing his legs*) He's either drunk, or just naturally crazy

TOM Joe?

JOE Yeah

TOM You won't get sore or anything?

JOE (*impatiently*) What is it, Tom?

ROM Joe, where do you get all that money? You paid for the automobile You paid for supper and the two bottles of champagne at the Half Moon Bay Restaurant You moved Kitty out of the New York Hotel around the corner to the St Francis Hotel on Powell Street I saw you pay her rent I saw you give her money for new clothes Where do you get all that money, Joe? Three years now and I've never asked

JOE (*looking at TOM sorrowfully, a little irritated, not so much with TOM as with the world and himself, his own superiority He speaks clearly, slowly and solemnly*) Now don't be a fool, Tom Listen carefully If anybody's got any money—to hoard or to throw away—you can be sure he stole it from other people Not from rich people who can spare it, but from poor people who can't From their

lives and from their dreams I'm no exception I *earned* the money I throw away I stole it like everybody else does I hurt people to get it Loafing around this way, I *still* earn money The money itself *earns more* I *still* hurt people I don't know who they are, or where they are If I did, I'd feel worse than I do I've got a *Christian* conscience in a world that's got no conscience at all The world's trying to get some sort of a *social* conscience, but it's having a devil of a time trying to do *that* I've got money I'll always have money, as long as this world stays the way it is I don't work I don't make anything (*He sips*) I drink I worked when I was a kid I worked *hard* I mean hard, Tom People are supposed to enjoy living I got tired (*He lifts the gun and looks at it while he talks*) I decided to get even on the world Well, you can't enjoy living unless you work Unless you do something I don't do anything I don't *want* to do anything any more There isn't anything I can do that won't make me feel embarrassed Because I can't do simple, good things I haven't the patience And I'm too smart Money is the guiltiest thing in the world It stinks Now, don't ever bother me about it again

TOM I didn't mean to make you feel bad, Joe

JOE (*Slowly*) Here Take this gun out in the street and give it to some worthy hold-up man

LADY What's he saying?

MAN (*uncrosses legs*) You wanted to visit a honky-tonk Well, *this* is a honky-tonk (*To the world*) Married twenty-eight years and she's still looking for adventure

TOM How should I know who's a hold-up man?

JOE Take it away Give it to somebody

TOM (*bewildered*) Do I have to give it to somebody?

JOE Of course

TOM Can't I take it back and get some of our money?

JOE Don't talk like a business man Look around and find somebody who appears to be in need of a gun and give it to him It's a good gun, isn't it?

TOM The man said it was, but how can I tell who needs a gun?

JOE Tom, you've seen good people who needed guns, haven't you?

TOM I don't remember Joe, I might give it to the wrong kind of guy He might do something crazy

JOE All right I'll find somebody myself (TOM rises) Here's some money Go get me this week's *Life, Liberty, Time*, and six or seven packages of chewing gum

TOM (*swiftly, in order to remember each item*) *Life, Liberty, Time*, and six or seven packages of chewing gum?

JOE That's right

TOM All that chewing gum? What kind?

JOE Any kind Mix 'em up All kinds

TOM Licorice, too?

JOE Licorice, by all means

TOM Juicy Fruit?

JOE Juicy Fruit

TOM Tutti-frutti?

JOE Is there such a gum?

TOM I think so

JOE All right Tutti-frutti, too Get all the kinds Get as many kinds as they're selling

TOM *Life, Liberty, Time*, and all the different kinds of gum (*He begins to go*)

JOE (*calling after him loudly*) Get some jelly beans too All the different colors

TOM All right, Joe

JOE And the longest panatela cigar you can find Six of them

TOM Panatela I got it

JOE Give a news-kid a dollar

TOM O K, Joe

JOE Give some old man a dollar

TOM O K, Joe

JOE Give them Salvation Army people in the street a couple of dollars and ask them to sing that song that goes— (*He sings loudly*)

Let the lower lights be burning, send a gleam across the wave

TOM (*swiftly*)

Let the lower lights be burning, send
a gleam across the wave

JOE That's it (*He goes on with the song, very loudly and religiously*)

Some poor, dying, struggling seaman,
you may rescue, you may save

(*Halts*)

TOM O K, Joe I got it *Life, Liberty, Time*, all the kinds of gum they're selling, jelly beans, six panatela cigars, a dollar for a news-kid, a dollar for an old man, two dollars for the Salvation Army (*Going*)

Let the lower lights be burning, send
a gleam across the wave

JOE That's it

LADY He's absolutely insane

MAN (*wearily crossing legs*) You asked me to take you to a honky-tonk, instead of to the Mark Hopkins You're *here* in a honky-tonk I can't help it if he's crazy Do you want to go back to where people *aren't* crazy?

LADY No, not just yet

MAN Well, all right then Don't be telling me every minute that he's crazy

LADY You needn't be huffy about it (*MAN refuses to answer, uncrosses legs When JOE began to sing, KIT CARSON turned away from the marble game and listened While the man and woman are arguing he comes over to JOE's table*)

KIT CARSON Presbyterian?

JOE I attended a Presbyterian Sunday School

KIT CARSON Fond of singing?

JOE On occasion Have a drink?

KIT CARSON Thanks

JOE Get a glass and sit down (*KIT CARSON gets a glass from NICK, re turns to the table, sits down, JOE pours him a drink, they touch glasses just as the Salvation Army people begin to fulfill the request They sip some champagne, and at the proper moment begin to sing the song together, sipping champagne, raising hell with the tune, swinging it, and so on The SOCIETY LADY joins them, and is stopped by her HUSBAND*) Always was fond of that song Used to sing it at the top of my voice Never saved a seaman in my life

KIT CARSON (*flirting with the SOCIETY LADY who loves it*) I saved a seaman once Well, he wasn't exactly a seaman He was a darty named Wellington Heavy-set sort of a fellow Nice personality, but no friends to speak of Not until I came along, at any rate In New Orleans In the summer of the year 1899 No Ninety-eight I was a lot younger of course, and had no mustache, but was regarded by many people as a man of means

JOE Know anything abo 't guns?

KIT CARSON (*flirting*) All there is to know Didn't fight the Onbways for nothing Up there in the Lake Takalooa Country, in Michigan (*Remembering*) Along about in 1881 or two Fought 'em right up to the shore of the Lake Made 'em swim for Canada One fellow in particular, an Indian named Harry Daisy

JOE (*opening the box containing the revolver*) What sort of a gun would you say this is? Any good?

KIT CARSON (*at sight of gun, leaping*) Yep That looks like a pretty nice hunk of shooting iron That's a six-shooter Shot a man with a six-shooter once Got him through the palm of his right hand Lifted his arm to wave to a friend Thought it was a bird Fellow named, I believe, Carroway Larrimore Carroway

JOE Know how to work one of these things? (*He offers KIT CARSON the revolver, which is old and enormous*)

KIT CARSON (*laughing at the absurd question*) Know how to work it? Hand me that little gun, son, and I'll show you all about it (*JOE hands KIT the revolver Importantly*) Let's see now This is probably a new kind of six-shooter After my time Haven't nicked an Indian in years I believe this here place is supposed to move out (*He fools around and gets the barrel out for loading*) That's it There it is

JOE Look all right?

KIT CARSON It's a good gun You've got a good gun there, son I'll explain it to you You see these holes? Well, that's where you put the cartridges

JOE (*taking some cartridges out of the box*) Here Show me how it's done

KIT CARSON (*a little impatiently*) Well, son, you take 'em one by one and put 'em in the holes, like this There's one Two Three Four Five Six Then you get the barrel back in place Then cock it Then all you got to do is aim and fire (*He points the gun at the LADY and GENTLEMAN*

who scream and stand up, scaring KIT CARSON into paralysis The gun is loaded, but uncocked)

JOE It's all set?

KIT CARSON Ready to kill

JOE Let me hold it
(*KIT hands JOE the gun The LADY and GENTLEMAN watch, in terror*)

KIT CARSON Careful, now, son Don't cock it Many a man's lost an eye fooling with a loaded gun Fellow I used to know named Danny Donovan lost a nose Ruined his whole life I told it firm Squeeze the trigger Don't snap it Spoils your aim

JOE Thanks Let's see if I can unload it (*He begins to unload it*)

KIT CARSON Of course you can
(*JOE unloads the revolver, looks at it very closely, puts the cartridges back into the box*)

JOE (*looking at gun*) I'm mighty grateful to you Always wanted to see one of those things close up Is it really a good one?

KIT CARSON It's a beaut, son

JOE (*aims the empty gun at a bottle on the bar*) Bang!

WILLIE (*at the marble game, as the machine groans*) Oh, Boy! (*Loudly, triumphantly*) There you are, Nick Thought I couldn't do it, hey? Now, watch (*The machine begins to make a special kind of noise Lights go on and off Some red, some green A bell rings loudly six times*) One Two Three Four Five Six (*An American flag jumps up WILLIE comes to attention Salutes*) Oh,

boy, what a beautiful country (A loud music-box version of the song "America" JOE, KIT, and the LADY get to their feet Singing "My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing" Everything quiets down The flag goes back into the machine WILLIE is thrill'd, amazed, delighted EVERYBODY has watched the performance of the defeated machine from wherever he happened to be when the performance began WILLIE, looking around at everybody, as if they had all been on the side of the machine) OK How's that? I knew I could do it (To NICK) Six nickels (NICK hands him six nickels WILLIE goes over to JOE and KIT) Took me a little while, but I finally did it It's scientific, really With a little skill a man can make a modest living beating the marble games Not that that's what I want to do I just don't like the idea of anything getting the best of me A machine or anything else Myself, I'm the kind of a guy who makes up his mind to do something, and then goes to work and does it There's no other way a man can be a success at anything (Indicating the letter "F" on his sweater) See that letter? That don't stand for some little-bitty high school somewhere That stands for me Faroughli Willie Faroughli I'm an Assyrian We've got a civilization six or seven centuries old, I think Somewhere along in there Ever hear of Osman? Harold Osman? He's an Assyrian, too He's got an orchestra down in Fresno (He goes to the LADY and GENTLEMAN) I've never seen you before in my life, but I can tell from the clothes you wear and the company you keep (Graciously indicating the LADY) that you're a man who looks every problem straight in the eye, and then goes to work and solves it I'm that way myself Well (He smiles

beautifully, takes the GENTLEMAN'S hand furiously) It's been wonderful talking to a nicer type of people for a change Well I'll be seeing you So long (He turns, takes two steps, returns to the table Very politely and seriously) Good-by, lady You've got a good man there Take good care of him (WILLIE goes, saluting JOE and the world)

KIT CARSON (to JOE) By God, for a while there I didn't think that young Assyrian was going to do it That fellow's got something (TOM comes back with the magazines and other stuff)

JOE Get it all?

TOM Yeah I had a little trouble finding the jelly beans

JOE Let's take a look at them

TOM These are the jelly beans (JOE puts his hand into the cellophane bag and takes out a handful of the jelly beans, looks at them, smiles, and tosses a couple into his mouth)

JOE Same as ever Have some (He offers the bag to KIT)

KIT CARSON (flirting) Thanks! I remember the first time I ever ate jelly beans I was six, or at the most seven Must have been in (Slowly) eighteen—seventy-seven Seven or eight Baltimore

JOE Have some, Tom (TOM takes some)

TOM Thanks, Joe

JOE Let's have some of that chewing gum (He dumps all the packages of gum out of the bag onto the table)

KIT CARSON (*flirting*) Me and a boy named Clark Quenton Clark Became a Senator

JOE Yeah Tutti-frutti, all right (*He opens a package and folds all five pieces into his mouth*) Always wanted to see how many I could chew at one time Tell you what, Tom I'll bet I can chew more at one time than you can

TOM (*delighted*) All right (*They both begin to fold gum into their mouths*)

KIT CARSON I'll referee Now, one at a time How many you got?

JOE Six

KIT CARSON All right Let Tom catch up with you

JOE (*while TOM's catching up*) Did you give a dollar to a news-kid?

TOM Yeah, sure

JOE What'd he say?

TOM Thanks

JOE What sort of a kid was he?

TOM Little, dark kid I guess he's Italian

JOE Did he seem pleased?

TOM Yeah

JOE That's good Did you give a dollar to an old man?

TOM Yeah

JOE Was he pleased?

TOM Yeah

JOE Good How many you got in your mouth?

TOM Six

JOE All right I got six, too (*Folds one more in his mouth TOM folds one too*)

KIT CARSON Seven Seven each (*They each fold one more into their mouths, very solemnly, chewing them into the main hunk of gum*) Eight Nine Ten

JOE (*delighted*) Always wanted to do this (*He picks up one of the magazines*) Let's see what's going on in the world (*He turns the pages and keeps folding gum into his mouth and chewing*)

KIT CARSON Eleven Twelve (*KIT continues to count while JOE and TOM continue the contest In spite of what they are doing, each is very serious*)

TOM Joe, what'd you want to move Kitty into the St Francis Hotel for?

JOE She's a better woman than any of them tramp society dames that hang around that lobby

TOM Yeah, but do you think she'll feel at home up there?

JOE Maybe not at first, but after a couple of days she'll be all right A nice big room A bed for sleeping in Good clothes Good food She'll be all right, Tom

TOM I hope so Don't you think she'll get lonely up there with nobody to talk to?

JOE (*looking at TOM sharply, almost with admiration, pleased but severe*) There's nobody anywhere for her to talk to—except you

TOM (*amazed and delighted*) Me, Joe?

JOE (*while TOM and KIT CARSON listen carefully, KIT with great appreciation*) Yes, you By the grace of God, you're the other half of that girl Not the angry woman that swaggers into this waterfront dive and shouts because the world has kicked her around *Anybody* can have her You belong to the little kid in Ohio who once dreamed of living Not with her carcass, for *money*, so she can have food and clothes, and pay rent With *all* of her I put her in that hotel, so she can have a chance to gather herself together again She can't do that in the New York Hotel You saw what happens there There's nobody anywhere for her to talk to, except you They all make her talk like a whore After a while, she'll *believe* them Then she won't be able to remember She'll get lonely Sure People can get lonely for *misery*, even I want her to go on being lonely for you, so she can come together again the way she was meant to be from the beginning Loneliness is good for people Right now it's the only thing for Kitty Any more liconce?

TOM (*dazed*) What? Liconce? (*Looking around busily*) I guess we've chewed all the liconce in We still got Clove, Peppermint, Doublemint, Beechnut, Teaberry, and Juicy Fruit

JOE Liconce used to be my favorite Don't worry about her, Tom, she'll be all right You really want to marry her, don't you?

TOM (*nodding*) Honest to God, Joe. (*Pathetically*) Only, I haven't got any money

JOE Couldn't you be a prize-fighter or something like that?

TOM Naaaah I couldn't hit a man if I wasn't sore at him He'd have to do something that made me hate him

JOE You've got to figure out something to do that you won't mind doing very much

TOM I wish I could, Joe

JOE (*thinking deeply, suddenly*) Tom, would you be embarrassed driving a truck?

TOM (*hit by a thunderbolt*) Joe, I never thought of that I'd like that Travel Highways Little towns Coffee and hot cakes Beautiful valleys and mountains and streams and trees and daybreak and sunset

JOE There is poetry in it, at that

TOM Joe, that's just the kind of work I *should* do Just sit there and travel, and look, and smile, and bust out laughing Could Kitty go with me, sometimes?

JOE I don't know Get me the phone book Can you drive a truck?

TOM Joe, you know I can drive a truck, or any kind of thing with a motor and wheels (*TOM takes JOE the phone book JOE turns the pages*)

JOE (*looking*) Here! Here it is Tuxedo 7900 Here's a nickel Get me that number (*TOM goes to telephone, dials the number*)

TOM Hello.

JOE Ask for Mr Keith

TOM (*mouth and language full of gum*) I'd like to talk to Mr Keith
(*Pause*) Mr Keith

JOE Take that gum out of your mouth for a minute
(*TOM removes the gum*)

TOM Mr Keith Yeah That's right
Hello, Mr Keith?

JOE Tell him to hold the line

TOM Hold the line, please

JOE Give me a hand, Tom (*TOM helps JOE to the telephone At phone, wad of gum in fingers delicately*)
Keith? Joe Yeah Fine Forget it
(*Pause*) Have you got a place for a good driver? (*Pause*) I don't think so (*To TOM*) You haven't got a driver's license, have you?

TOM (*worried*) No But I can get one, Joe

JOE (*at phone*) No, but he can get one easy enough To hell with the union He'll join later All right, call him a Vice-President and say he drives for relaxation Sure What do you mean? Tonight? I don't know why not San Diego? All right, let him start driving without a license What the hell's the difference? Yeah Sure Look him over Yeah I'll send him right over Right (*He hangs up*) Thanks (*To telephone*)

TOM Am I going to get the job?

JOE He wants to take a look at you

TOM Do I look all right, Joe?

JOE (*looking at him carefully*) Hold up your head Stick out your chest How do you feel?
(*TOM does these things*)

TOM Fine

JOE You look fine, too (*JOE takes his wad of gum out of his mouth and wraps Liberty magazine around it*)

JOE You win, Tom Now, look (*He bites off the tip of a very long panatela cigar, lights it, and hands one to TOM, and another to KIT*) Have yourselves a pleasant smoke Here (*He hands two more to TOM*) Give those slummers one each (*He indicates the SOCIETY LADY and GENTLEMAN TOM goes over and without a word gives a cigar each to the MAN and the LADY The MAN is offended, he smells and tosses aside his cigar The WOMAN looks at her cigar a moment, then puts the cigar in her mouth*)

MAN What do you think you're doing?

LADY Really, dear I'd like to

MAN Oh, this is too much

LADY I'd really, really like to, dear (*She laughs, puts the cigar in her mouth Turns to KIT He spits out tip She does the same*)

MAN (*loudly*) The mother of five grown men, and she's still looking for romance (*Shouts as KIT lights her cigar*) No I forbid it

JOE (*shouting*) What's the matter with you? Why don't you leave her alone? What are you always pushing your women around for? (*Almost without a pause*) Now, look, Tom (*The LADY puts the lighted cigar in*

her mouth, and begins to smoke, feeling wonderful) Here's ten bucks

TOM Ten bucks?

JOE He may want you to get into a truck and begin driving to San Diego tonight

TOM Joe, I got to tell Kitty

JOE I'll tell her

TOM Joe, take care of her

JOE She'll be all right Stop worrying about her She's at the St Francis Hotel Now, look Take a cab to Townsend and Fourth You'll see the big sign Keith Motor Transport Company He'll be waiting for you

TOM O K, Joe (*Trying hard*) Thanks, Joe

JOE Don't be silly Get going
(TOM goes LADY starts puffing on cigar As TOM goes, WESLEY and HARRY come in together)

NICK Where the hell have you been? We've got to have some entertainment around here Can't you see them fine people from uptown? (He points at the SOCIETY LADY and GENTLEMAN)

WESLEY You said to come back at ten for the second show

NICK Did I say that?

WESLEY Yes, sir, Mr Nick, that's exactly what you said

HARRY Was the first show all right?

NICK That wasn't a show There was no one here to see it How can it be

a show when no one sees it? People are afraid to come down to the waterfront

HARRY Yeah We were just down to Pier 27 One of the longshoremen and a cop had a fight and the cop hit him over the head with a blackjack. We saw it happen, didn't we?

WESLEY Yes, sir, we was standing there looking when it happened

NICK (*a little worried*) Anything else happen?

WESLEY They was all talking

HARRY A man in a big car came up and said there was going to be a meeting right away and they hoped to satisfy everybody and stop the strike

WESLEY Right away Tonight

NICK Well, it's about time Them poor cops are liable to get nervous and—shoot somebody (*To HARRY, suddenly*) Come back here I want you to tend bar for a while I'm going to take a walk over to the pier

HARRY Yes, sir

NICK (*to the SOCIETY LADY and GENTLEMAN*) You society people made up your minds yet?

LADY Have you champagne?

NICK (*indicating JOE*) What do you think he's pouring out of that bottle, water or something?

LADY Have you a chill bottle?

NICK I've got a dozen of them chilled He's been drinking champagne here all day and all night for a month now

LADY May we have a bottle?

NICK It's six dollars

LADY I think we can manage

MAN I don't know I know I don't know

(NICK takes off his coat and helps HARRY into it HARRY takes a bottle of champagne and two glasses to the LADY and GENTLEMAN, dancing, collects six dollars, and goes back behind the bar, dancing NICK gets his coat and hat)

NICK (to WESLEY) Rattle the keys a little, son Rattle the keys

WESLEY Yes, sir, Mr Nick
(NICK is on his way out The ARAB enters)

NICK Hi-ya, Mahmed

ARAB No foundation

NICK All the way down the line
(He goes WESLEY is at the piano, playing quietly The ARAB swallows a glass of beer, takes out his harmonica, and begins to play WESLEY fits his playing to the Arab's KITTY DUVAL, strangely beautiful, in new clothes, comes in She walks shyly, as if she were embarrassed by the fine clothes, as if she had no right to wear them The LADY and GENTLEMAN are very impressed HARRY looks at her with amazement JOE is reading Time magazine KITTY goes to his table JOE looks up from the magazine, without the least amazement)

JOE Hello, Kitty

KITTY Hello, Joe

JOE It's nice seeing you again

KITTY I came in a cab

JOE You been crying again? (KITTY can't answer To HARRY) Bring a glass (HARRY comes over with a glass JOE pours KITTY a drink)

KITTY I've got to talk to you

JOE Have a drink

KITTY I've never been in burlesque
We were just poor

JOE Sit down, Kitty

KITTY (sits down) I tried other things

JOE Here's to you, Katerina Koronovsky Here's to you And Tom

KITTY (sorrowfully) Where is Tom?

JOE He's getting a job tonight driving a truck He'll be back in a couple of days

KITTY (sadly) I told him I'd marry him

JOE He wanted to see you and say good-by

KITTY He's too good for me He's like a little boy (Wearily) I'm— Too many things have happened to me

JOE Kitty Duval, you're one of the few truly innocent people I have ever known He'll be back in a couple of days Go back to the hotel and wait for him

KITTY That's what I mean I can't stand being alone I'm no good I tried very hard I don't know what it is I miss— (She gestures)

JOE (*gently*) Do you really want to come back here, Kitty?

KITTY I don't know I'm not sure Everything *smells* different I don't know how to feel, or what to think (*Gesturing pathetically*) I know I don't belong there It's what I've wanted all my life, but it's too late I try to be happy about it, but all I can do is remember everything and cry

JOE I don't know what to tell you, Kitty I didn't mean to hurt you

KITTY You haven't hurt me You're the only person who's ever been good to me I've never known anybody like you I'm not sure about love any more, but I know I love you, and I know I love Tom

JOE I love you too, Kitty Duval

KITTY He'll want babies I know he will I know I will, too Of course I will I can't— (*She shakes her head*)

JOE Tom's a baby himself You'll be very happy together He wants you to ride with him in the truck Tom's good for you You're good for Tom

KITTY (*like a child*) Do you want me to go back and wait for him?

JOE I can't tell you what to do I think it would be a good idea, though

KITTY I wish I could tell you how it makes me feel to be alone It's almost worse

JOE It might take a whole week, Kitty (*He looks at her sharply, at the arrival of an idea*) Didn't you speak of reading a book? A book of poems?

KITTY I didn't know what I was saying

JOE (*trying to get up*) Of course you knew I think you'll like poetry Wait here a minute, Kitty I'll go see if I can find some books

KITTY All right, Joe (*He walks out of the place, trying very hard not to wobble Fog-horn Music The NEWSBOY comes in Looks for JOE Is broken-hearted because JOE is gone*)

NEWSBOY (*to SOCIETY GENTLEMAN*) Paper?

MAN (*angry*) No (*The NEWSBOY goes to the ARAB*)

NEWSBOY Paper, Mister?

ARAB (*irritated*) No foundation

NEWSBOY What?

ARAB (*very angry*) No foundation (*The NEWSBOY starts out, turns, looks at the ARAB, shakes head*)

NEWSBOY No foundation? How do you figure? (*BLICK and TWO COPS enter*)

NEWSBOY (*to BLICK*) Paper, Mister? (*BLICK pushes him aside The NEWSBOY goes*)

BLICK (*walking authoritatively about the place, to HARRY*) Where's Nick?

HARRY He went for a walk

BLICK Who are you?

HARRY Harry

BLICK (*to the ARAB and WESLEY*)
Hey, you Shut up
(*The ARAB stops playing the har-*
monica, WESLEY the piano)

BLICK (*studies KITTY*) What's your name, sister?

KITTY (*looking at him*) Kitty Duval
What's it to you? (*KITTY's voice is*
now like it was at the beginning of
the play tough, independent, bitter
and hard)

BLICK (*angry*) Don't give me any of your gutter lip Just answer my questions

KITTY You go to hell, you

BLICK (*coming over, enraged*)
Where do you live?

KITTY The New York Hotel Room
21

BLICK Where do you work?

KITTY I'm not working just now I'm looking for work

BLICK What kind of work? (*KITTY*
can't answer) What kind of work?
(*KITTY can't answer Furiously*)
WHAT KIND OF WORK?
(*KIT CARSON comes over*)

KIT CARSON You can't talk to a lady that way in my presence
(**BLICK** turns and stares at **KIT** *The*
COPS begin to move from the bar)

BLICK (*to the COPS*) It's all right, boys I'll take care of this (*To KIT*)
What'd you say?

KIT CARSON You got no right to hurt people Who are you?
(**BLICK, without a word, takes KIT to**

the street Sounds of a blow and a
groan BLICK returns, breathing
hard)

BLICK (*to the COPS*) O K, boys You can go now Take care of him Put him on his feet and tell him to behave himself from now on. (*To KITTY again*) Now answer my question What kind of work?

KITTY (*quietly*) I'm a whore you son of a bitch You know what kind of work I do And I know what kind you do

MAN (*shocked and really hurt*) Excuse me, officer, but it seems to me that your attitude—

BLICK Shut up

MAN (*quietly*) —is making the poor child say things that are not true

BLICK Shut up, I said

LADY Well (*To the MAN*) Are you going to stand for such insolence?

BLICK (*to MAN, who is standing*)
Are you?

MAN (*taking the WOMAN's arm*) I'll get a divorce I'll start life all over again (*Pushing the WOMAN*) Come on Get the hell out of here! (*The MAN hurries his WOMAN out of the place, BLICK watching them go*)

BLICK (*to KITTY*) Now Let's begin again, and see that you tell the truth What's your name?

KITTY Kitty Duval

BLICK Where do you live?

KITTY Until this evening I lived at the New York Hotel Room 21 This evening I moved to the St Francis Hotel

BLICK Oh To the St Francis Hotel Nice place Where do you work?

KITTY I'm looking for work

BLICK What kind of work do you do?

KITTY I'm an actress

BLICK I see What movies have I seen you in?

KITTY I've worked in burlesque

BLICK You're a liar
(WESLEY stands, worried and full of dumb resentment)

KITTY (pathetically, as at the beginning of the play) It's the truth

BLICK What are you doing here?

KITTY I came to see if I could get a job here

BLICK Doing what?

KITTY Singing—and—dancing

BLICK You can't sing or dance What are you lying for?

KITTY I can I sang and danced in burlesque all over the country

BLICK You're a liar

KITTY I said lines, too

BLICK So you danced in burlesque?

KITTY Yes

BLICK All right Let's see what you did

KITTY I can't There's no music, and I haven't got the right clothes

BLICK There's music (To WESLEY) Put a nickel in that phonograph (WESLEY can't move) Come on Put a nickel in that phonograph (WESLEY does so To KITTY) All right Get up on that stage and do a hot little burlesque number (KITTY stands Walks slowly to the stage, but is unable to move JOE comes in, holding three books) Get going, now Let's see you dance the way you did in burlesque, all over the country (KITTY tries to do a burlesque dance It is beautiful in a tragic way)

BLICK All right, start taking them off!

(KITTY removes her hat and starts to remove her jacket JOE moves closer to the stage, amazed)

JOE (hurrying to KITTY) Get down from there (He takes KITTY into his arms She is crying To BLICK) What the hell do you think you're doing?

WESLEY (like a little boy, very angry) It's that man, Blick He made her take off her clothes He beat up the old man, too
(BLICK pushes WESLEY off, as TOM enters BLICK begins beating up WESLEY)

TOM What's the matter, Joe? What's happened?

JOE Is the truck out there?

TOM Yeah, but what's happened? Kitty's crying again!

JOE You driving to San Diego?

TOM Yeah, Joe But what's he doing to that poor colored boy?

JOE Get going Here's some money Everything's O K (To KITTY) Dress in the truck Take these books

WESLEY'S VOICE You can't hurt me You'll get yours You wait and see

TOM Joe, he's hurting that boy I'll kill him!

JOE (pushing TOM) Get out of here! Get married in San Diego I'll see you when you get back (TOM and KITTY go NICK enters and stands at the lower end of bar JOE takes the revolver out of his pocket Looks at it) I've always wanted to kill somebody, but I never knew who it should be (He cocks the revolver, stands real straight, holds it in front of him firmly and walks to the door He stands a moment watching BLICK, aims very carefully, and pulls trigger There is no shot NICK runs over and grabs the gun, and takes JOE aside)

NICK What the hell do you think you're doing?

JOE (casually, but angry) That dumb Tom Buys a six-shooter that won't even shoot once (JOE sits down, dead to the world BLICK comes out, panting for breath NICK looks at him He speaks slowly)

NICK Blink! I told you to stay out of here! Now get out of here (He takes BLICK by the collar, tightening his grip as he speaks, and pushing him out) If you come back again, I'm going to take you in that room where you've been beating up that colored boy, and I'm going to murder you—slowly—with my hands Beat it! (He

pushes BLICK out To HARRY) Go take care of the colored boy (HARRY runs out WILLIE returns and doesn't sense that anything is changed WILLIE puts another nickel into the machine, but he does so very violently The consequence of this violence is that the flag comes up again WILLIE, amazed, stands at attention and salutes The flag goes down He shakes his head)

WILLIE (thoughtfully) As far as I'm concerned, this is the only country in the world If you ask me, nuts to Europe! (He is about to push the slide in again when the flag comes up again Furiously, to NICK, while he salutes and stands at attention, pleadingly) Hey, Nick This machine is out of order

NICK (somerberly) Give it a whack on the side (WILLIE does so A hell of a whack The result is the flag comes up and down, and WILLIE keeps saluting)

WILLIE (saluting) Hey, Nick Something's wrong (The machine quiets down abruptly WILLIE very stealthily slides a new nickel in, and starts a new game From a distance two pistol shots are heard, each carefully timed NICK runs out The NEWSBOY enters, crosses to JOE's table, senses something is wrong)

NEWSBOY (softly) Paper, Mister? (JOE can't hear him The NEWSBOY backs away, studies JOE, wishes he could cheer JOE up Notices the photograph, goes to it, and puts a coin in it, hoping music will make JOE happier The NEWSBOY sits down Watches JOE The music begins "The Missouri Waltz" The DRUNKARD comes in and walks around Then sits down NICK comes back)

NICK (*delighted*) Joe, Blick's dead! Somebody just shot him, and none of the cops are trying to find out who (*JOE doesn't hear NICK steps back, studying JOE Shouting*) Joe

JOE (*looking up*) What?

NICK Blick's dead

JOE Blick? Dead? Good! That God-damn gun wouldn't go off I told Tom to get a good one

NICK (*picking up gun and looking at it*) Joe, you wanted to kill that guy!

(*HARRY returns JOE puts the gun in his coat pocket*) I'm going to buy you a bottle of champagne (*NICK goes to bar JOE rises, takes hat from rack, puts coat on The NEWSBOY jumps up, helps JOE with coat*)

NICK What's the matter, Joe?

JOE Nothing Nothing

NICK How about the champagne?

JOE Thanks (*Going*)

NICK It's not eleven yet Where you going, Joe?

JOE I don't know Nowhere

NICK Will I see you tomorrow?

JOE I don't know I don't think so (*KIT CARSON enters, walks to JOE. JOE and KIT look at one another knowingly*)

JOE Somebody just shot a man How are you feeling?

KIT Never felt better in my life (*Loudly, bragging, but somber*) I shot a man once In San Francisco Shot him two times In 1939, I think it was In October Fellow named Blick or Glick or something like that Couldn't stand the way he talked to ladies Went up to my room and got my old pearl-handled revolver and waited for him on Pacific Street Saw him walking, and let him have it, two times Had to throw the beautiful revolver into the Bay (*HARRY, NICK, the ARAB and the DRUNKARD close in around him JOE searches his pockets, brings out the revolver, puts it in KIT's hand, looks at him with great admiration and affection JOE walks slowly to the stairs leading to the street, turns and waves KIT, and then one by one everybody else, waves, and the marble game goes into its beautiful American routine again flag, lights, and music The play ends*)

CURTAIN

Life with Father

BY HOWARD LINDSAY AND
RUSSEL CROUSE

TO

OSCAR SERLIN
WHO STARTED AS OUR PRODUCER AND
REMAINS OUR FRIEND

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Life with Father was produced at the Empire Theatre, New York City, by Oscar Serlin, on November 8, 1939. Following is the original cast:

| | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| ANNIE | Katherine Bard |
| VINNIE | Dorothy Stickney |
| CLARENCE | John Drew Devereaux |
| JOHN | Richard Simon |
| WHITNEY | Raymond Roe |
| HARLAN | Larry Robinson |
| FATHER | Howard Lindsay |
| MARGARET | Dorothy Bernard |
| CORA | Ruth Hammond |
| MARY | Teresa Wright |
| THE REVEREND DR LLOYD | Richard Sterling |
| DELIA | Portia Morrow |
| NORA | Nellie Burt |
| DR HUMPHREYS | A. H. Van Buren |
| DR SOMERS | John C. King |
| MAGGIE | Timothy Kears |

Staged by Bretaigne Windust
Setting and Costumes by Stewart Chaney

SCENES

The time late in the 1880's
The entire action takes place in the Morning Room of the Day home
on Madison Avenue

ACT ONE

SCENE I

Breakfast time An early summer morning

SCENE II

Tea time The same day

ACT TWO

SCENE I

Sunday, after church A week later

SCENE II

Breakfast time Two days later

(During Scene II the curtain is lowered to denote a lapse of three hours.)

ACT THREE

SCENE I

Mid-afternoon A month later

SCENE II

Breakfast time The next morning

LIFE WITH FATHER

ACT ONE

SCENE I

The Morning Room of the Day home at 420 Madison Avenue. In the custom of the Victorian period, this was the room where the family gathered for breakfast, and because it was often the most comfortable room in the house, it served also as a living-room for the family and their intimates.

There is a large arch in the center of the upstage wall of the room, through which we can see the hall and the stairs leading to the second floor and below them the rail of the stairwell leading to the basement. The room can be closed off from the hall by sliding doors in the archway. The front door of the house, which is stage right, can't be seen, but frequently is heard to slam.

In the Morning Room the sunshine streams through the large window at the right which looks out on Madison Avenue. The room itself is furnished with the somewhat less than comfortable furniture of the period, which is the late 1880's. The general color scheme in drapes and upholstery is green. Below the window is a large comfortable chair where FATHER generally sits to read his paper. Right of center is the table which serves as a living-room table, with its proper table cover and fruit bowl, but now, expanded by extra leaves, it is doing service as a breakfast table. Against the back wall, either side of the arch, are two console tables which are used by the maid as serving tables. Left of center is a sofa, with a table just above its right end holding a lamp, framed photographs, and other ornaments. In the left wall is a fireplace, its mantel draped with a lambrequin. On the mantel are a clock and other ornaments, and above the mantel is a large mirror in a Victorian frame. The room is cluttered with the minutæ of the period, including the inevitable rubber plant, and looking down from the walls are the Day ancestors in painted portraits. The room has the warm quality that comes only from having been lived in by a family which enjoys each other's company—a family of considerable means.

As the curtain rises, ANNIE, the new maid, a young Irish girl, is finishing setting the table for breakfast. After an uncertain look at the result she crosses over to her tray on the console table. VINNIE comes down the stairs and into the room. VINNIE is a charming, lovable, and spirited woman of forty. She has a lively mind which darts quickly away from any practical matter. She has red hair.

ANNIE Good morning, ma'am

VINNIE Good morning, Annie How are you getting along?

ANNIE All right, ma'am, I hope

VINNIE Now, don't be worried just because this is your first day Everything's going to be all right—but I do hope nothing goes wrong (*Goes to the table*) Now, let's see, is the table all set? (*ANNIE follows her*) The cream and the sugar go down at this end

ANNIE (*placing them where VINNIE has indicated*) I thought in the center, ma'am, everyone could reach them easier

VINNIE Mr Day sits here

ANNIE (*gets a tray of napkins, neatly rolled and in their rings, from the console table*) I didn't know where to place the napkins, ma'am

VINNIE You can tell which go where by the rings (*Takes them from the tray and puts them down as she goes around the table ANNIE follows her*) This one belongs to Whitney—it has his initial on it, "W", that one with the little dog on it is Harlan's, of course He's the baby This "J" is for John and the "C" is for Clarence This narrow plain one is mine And this is Mr Day's It's just like mine—except that it got bent one morning And that reminds me—always be sure Mr Day's coffee is piping hot

ANNIE Ah, your man has coffee instead of tea of a morning?

VINNIE We all have coffee except the two youngest boys They have their

milk And, Annie, always speak of my husband as Mr Day

ANNIE I will that

VINNIE (*correcting her*) "Yes, ma'am," Annie

ANNIE Yes, ma'am

VINNIE And if Mr Day speaks to you, just say "Yes, sir" Don't be nervous—you'll get used to him (*CLARENCE, the eldest son, about seventeen, comes down the stairs and into the room He is a manly, serious, good-looking boy Because he is starting in at Yale next year, he thinks he is grown-up He is red-headed*)

CLARENCE Good morning, Mother (*He kisses her*)

VINNIE Good morning, Clarence

CLARENCE Did you sleep well, Mother?

VINNIE Yes, thank you, dear (*CLARENCE goes to FATHER's chair and picks up the morning paper To ANNIE*) We always start with fruit, except the two young boys, who have porridge (*ANNIE brings the fruit and porridge to the table CLARENCE, looking at the paper, makes a whistling sound*)

CLARENCE Jiminy! Another wreck on the New Haven That always disturbs the market Father won't like that

VINNIE I do wish that New Haven would stop having wrecks If they knew how it upset your father—(*Sees that CLARENCE's coat has been torn and mended*) My soul and body,

Clarence, what's happened to your coat?

CLARENCE I tore it Margaret mended it for me

VINNIE It looks terrible Why don't you wear your blue suit?

CLARENCE That looks worse than this one You know, I burnt that hole in it

VINNIE Oh, yes—well, you can't go around looking like that I'll have to speak to your father Oh, dear!

(JOHN, who is about fifteen, comes down the stairs and into the room JOHN is gangly and a little overgrown He is red-headed)

JOHN Good morning, Mother (He kisses her)

VINNIE Good morning, John

JOHN (to CLARENCE) Who won?

CLARENCE I haven't looked yet

JOHN Let me see (He tries to take the paper away from CLARENCE)

CLARENCE Be careful!

VINNIE Boys, don't wrinkle that paper before your father's looked at it

CLARENCE (to JOHN) Yes!
(VINNIE turns to ANNIE)

VINNIE You'd better get things started We want everything ready when Mr Day comes down (ANNIE exits) Clarence, right after breakfast I want you and John to move the small bureau from my room into yours

CLARENCE What for? Is somebody coming to visit us?

JOHN Who's coming?

VINNIE I haven't said anyone was coming And don't you say anything about it I want it to be a surprise

CLARENCE Oh! Father doesn't know yet?

VINNIE No And I'd better speak to him about a new suit for you before he finds out he's being surprised by visitors

(ANNIE enters with a tray on which are two glasses of milk, which she puts at HARLAN'S and WHITNEY'S places at the table WHITNEY comes down the stairs and rushes into the room He is about thirteen Suiting his age, he is a lively active boy He is red-headed)

WHITNEY Morning (He kisses his mother quickly, then runs to CLARENCE and JOHN) Who won?

JOHN The Giants, 7 to 3 Buck Ewing hit a home run

WHITNEY Let me see!

(HARLAN comes sliding down the banister He enters the room, runs to his mother, and kisses her HARLAN is a roly-poly, lovable, good-natured youngster of six He is red-headed)

VINNIE How's your finger, darling?

HARLAN It itches

VINNIE (kissing the finger) That's a sign it's getting better Now don't scratch it Sit down, boys Get in your chair, darling (The boys move to the table and take their places CLARENCE puts the newspaper beside

his father's plate JOHN stands waiting to place VINNIE's chair when she sits)
Now, Annie, watch Mr Day, and as soon as he finishes his fruit— (*Leaves the admonition hanging in mid-air as the sound of FATHER's voice booms from upstairs*)

FATHER's VOICE Vinnie! Vinnie!
(*All eyes turn toward the staircase VINNIE rushes to the foot of the stairs, speaking as she goes*)

VINNIE What's the matter, Clare?

FATHER's VOICE Where's my necktie?

VINNIE Which necktie?

FATHER's VOICE The one I gave you yesterday

VINNIE It isn't pressed yet I forgot to give it to Margaret

FATHER's VOICE I told you distinctly I wanted to wear that necktie today

VINNIE You've got plenty of neckties Put on another one right away and come down to breakfast

FATHER's VOICE Oh, damn! Damnation! (*VINNIE goes to her place at the table JOHN places her chair for her, then sits WHITNEY has started eating*)

CLARENCE Whitney!

VINNIE Wait for your father, Whitney

WHITNEY Oh, and I'm in a hurry! John, can I borrow your glove today? I'm going to pitch

JOHN If I don't play myself

WHITNEY Look, if you need it, we're playing in that big field at the corner of Fifty-seventh and Madison

VINNIE 'Way up there!

WHITNEY They're building a house on that vacant lot on Fiftheth Street

VINNIE My! My! My! Here we move to Forty-eighth Street just to get out of the city!

WHITNEY Can't I start breakfast, Mother? I promised to be there by eight o'clock

VINNIE After breakfast, Whitney, you have to study your catechism

WHITNEY Mother, can't I do that this afternoon?

VINNIE Whitney, you have to learn five questions every morning before you leave the house

WHITNEY Aw, Mother—

VINNIE You weren't very sure of yourself when I heard you last night

WHITNEY I know them now

VINNIE Let's see (*WHITNEY rises and faces his mother*) "What is your name?"

WHITNEY Whitney Benjamin

VINNIE "Who gave you this name?"

WHITNEY "My sponsors in baptism, wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven" Mother, if I hadn't been baptized wouldn't I have a name?

VINNIE. Not in the sight of the Church "What did your sponsors then for you?"

WHITNEY "They did promise and vow three things in my name—" (FATHER makes his appearance on the stairway and comes down into the room FATHER is in his forties, distinguished in appearance, with great charm and vitality, extremely well dressed in a conservative way He is red-headed)

FATHER (heartily) Good morning boys (They rise and answer him) Good morning, Vinnie (He goes to her and kisses her) Have a good night?

VINNIE Yes, thank you, Clare

FATHER Good! Sit down, boys (The doorbell rings and a postman's whistle is heard)

VINNIE That's the doorbell, Annie (ANNIE exits) Clare, that new suit looks very nice

FATHER Too damn tight! (He sits in his place at the head of the table) What's the matter with those fellows over in London? I wrote them a year ago they were making my clothes too tight!

VINNIE You've put on a little weight, Clare

FATHER I weigh just the same as I always have (Attacks his orange The boys dive into their breakfasts ANNIE enters with the mail, starts to take it to VINNIE FATHER sees her) What's that? The mail? That goes to me (ANNIE gives the mail to FATHER and exits with her tray)

VINNIE Well, Clarence has just managed to tear the only decent suit of clothes he has

FATHER (looking through the mail) Here's one for you, Vinnie John, hand that to your mother (He passes the letter on)

VINNIE Clare dear, I'm sorry, but I'm afraid Clarence is going to have to have a new suit of clothes

FATHER Vinnie, Clarence has to learn not to be so hard on his clothes

CLARENCE Father, I thought—

FATHER Clarence, when you start in Yale in the fall, I'm going to set aside a thousand dollars just to outfit you, but you'll get no new clothes this summer

CLARENCE Can't I have one of your old suits cut down for me?

FATHER Every suit I own still has plenty of wear in it I wear my clothes until they're worn out

VINNIE Well, if you want your clothes worn out, Clarence can wear them out much faster than you can

CLARENCE Yes, and, Father, you don't get a chance to wear them out Every time you get a new batch of clothes, Mother sends the old ones to the missionary barrel I guess I'm just as good as any old missionary (ANNIE returns with a platter of bacon and eggs and a pot of coffee)

VINNIE Clarence, before you compare yourself to a missionary, remember the sacrifices they make

FATHER (*chuckling*) I don't know, Vinnie, I think my clothes would look better on Clarence than on some Hottentot (To CLARENCE) Have that black suit of mine cut down to fit you before your mother gets her hands on it

(ANNIE *clears the fruit*)

CLARENCE Thank you, Father (To JOHN) One of Father's suits! Thank you, sir!

FATHER Whitney, don't eat so fast

WHITNEY Well, Father, I'm going to pitch today and I promised to get there early, but before I go I have to study my catechism

FATHER What do you bother with that for?

VINNIE (*with spirit*) Because if he doesn't know his catechism he can't be confirmed!

WHITNEY (*pleading*) But I'm going to pitch today

FATHER Vinnie, Whitney's going to pitch today and he can be confirmed any old time

VINNIE Clare, sometimes it seems to me that you don't care whether your children get to Heaven or not

FATHER Oh, Whitney'll get to Heaven all right (To WHITNEY) I'll be there before you are, Whitney, I'll see that you get in

VINNIE What makes you so sure they'll let you in?

FATHER Well, if they don't I'll certainly raise a devil of a row (ANNIE is at FATHER's side with the platter of

bacon and eggs, ready to serve him, and draws back at this astounding declaration, raising the platter)

VINNIE (*with shocked awe*) Clare, I do hope you'll behave when you get to Heaven

(FATHER has turned to serve himself from the platter, but ANNIE, not yet recovered from the picture of FATHER raising a row at the gates of Heaven, is holding it too high for him)

FATHER (*storming*) Vinnie, how many times have I asked you not to engage a maid who doesn't even know how to serve properly?

VINNIE Clare, can't you see she's new and doing her best?

FATHER How can I serve myself when she's holding that platter over my head?

VINNIE Annie, why don't you hold it lower?

(ANNIE lowers the platter FATHER serves himself, but goes on talking)

FATHER Where'd she come from anyway? What became of the one we had yesterday? I don't see why you can't keep a maid

VINNIE Oh, you don't!

FATHER All I want is service (ANNIE serves the others nervously So far as FATHER is concerned, however, the storm has passed, and he turns generally to WHITNEY) Whitney, when we get to Heaven we'll organize a baseball team of our own (The boys laugh)

VINNIE It would be just like you to try to run things up there

FATHER Well, from all I've heard about Heaven, it seems to be a pretty unbusinesslike place. They could probably use a good man like me. *(Stamps on the floor three times. It is his traditional signal to summon MARGARET, the cook, from the kitchen below.)*

VINNIE What do you want Margaret for? What's wrong?
(ANNIE has reached the sideboard and is sniffing audibly.)

FATHER *(distracted)* What's that damn noise?

VINNIE Shhh—it's Annie.

FATHER Annie? Who's Annie?

VINNIE The maid *(ANNIE, seeing that she has attracted attention, hurries out into the hall where she can't be seen or heard)*. Clare, aren't you ashamed of yourself?

FATHER *(surprised)* What have I done now?

VINNIE You made her cry—speaking to her the way you did.

FATHER I never said a word to her—I was addressing myself to you.

VINNIE I do wish you'd be more careful. It's hard enough to keep a maid—and the uniforms just fit this one.
(MARGARET, the cook, a small Irish-woman of about fifty, hurries into the room.)

MARGARET What's wanting?

FATHER Margaret, this bacon is good.
(MARGARET beams and gestures dep-

recatingly.) It's good. It's done just right!

MARGARET Yes, sir! *(She smiles and exits. ANNIE returns, recovered, and starts serving the coffee. VINNIE has opened her letter and glanced through it.)*

VINNIE Clare, this letter gives me a good idea. I've decided that next winter I won't give a series of dinners.

FATHER I should hope not.

VINNIE I'll give a big musicale instead.

FATHER You'll give a what?

VINNIE A musicale.

FATHER *(peremptorily)* Vinnie, I won't have my peaceful home turned into a Roman arena with a lot of hairy fiddlers prancing about.

VINNIE I didn't say a word about hairy fiddlers. Mrs. Spiller has written me about this lovely young girl who will come for very little.

FATHER What instrument does this inexpensive paragon play?

VINNIE She doesn't play, Clare, she whistles.

FATHER Whistles? Good God!

VINNIE She whistles sixteen different pieces. All for twenty-five dollars.

FATHER *(stormily)* I won't pay twenty-five dollars to any human peanut stand. *(He tastes his coffee, grimaces, and again stamps three times on the floor.)*

VINNIE Clare, I can arrange this so it won't cost you a penny. If I invite fifty people and charge them fifty cents apiece, there's the twenty-five dollars right there!

FATHER You can't invite people to your own house and charge them admission.

VINNIE I can if the money's for the missionary fund.

FATHER Then where will you get the twenty-five dollars to pay that poor girl for her whistling?

VINNIE Now, Clare, let's not cross that bridge until we come to it.

FATHER And if we do cross it, it will cost me twenty-five dollars. Vinnie, I'm putting my foot down about this musicale, just as I've had to put my foot down about your keeping this house full of visiting relatives. Why can't we live here by ourselves in peace and comfort?

(MARGARET comes dashing into the room.)

MARGARET What's wanting?

FATHER (sternly) Margaret, what is this? (He holds up his coffee cup and points at it.)

MARGARET It's coffee, sir.

FATHER It is not coffee! You couldn't possibly take water and coffee beans and arrive at that! It's slops, that's what it is—slops! Take it away! Take it away, I tell you! (MARGARET takes FATHER'S cup and dashes out. ANNIE starts to take VINNIE'S cup.)

VINNIE Leave my coffee there, Annie! It's perfectly all right!
(ANNIE leaves the room.)

FATHER (angrily) It is not! I swear I can't imagine how she concocts such an atrocity. I come down to this table every morning hungry—

VINNIE Well, if you're hungry, Clare, why aren't you eating your breakfast?

FATHER What?

VINNIE If you're hungry, why aren't you eating your breakfast?

FATHER (thrown out of bounds) I am. (He takes a mouthful of bacon and munches it happily, his eyes falling on HARLAN.) Harlan, how's that finger? Come over here and let me see it. (HARLAN goes to his father's side. He shows his finger.) Well, that's healing nicely. Now don't pick that scab or it will leave a scar, and we don't want scars on our fingers, do we? (He chuckles.) I guess you'll remember after this that cats don't like to be hugged. It's all right to stroke them, but don't squeeze them. Now go back and finish your oatmeal.

HARLAN I don't like oatmeal.

FATHER (kindly) It's good for you. Go back and eat it.

HARLAN But I don't like it.

FATHER (quietly, but firmly) I'll tell you what you like and what you don't like. You're not old enough to know about such things. You've no business not to like oatmeal. It's good.

HARLAN I hate it.

FATHER (firmly, but not quietly) That's enough! We won't discuss it! Eat that oatmeal at once!

(In contrast to HARLAN, WHITNEY has been eating his oatmeal at a terrific rate of speed. He pauses and puts down his spoon.)

WHITNEY I've finished my oatmeal. May I be excused?

FATHER Yes, Whitney, you may go. *(WHITNEY slides off his chair and hurries to the stairs.)* Pitch a good game.

VINNIE Whitney!

WHITNEY I'm going upstairs to study my catechism.

VINNIE Oh, that's all right. Run along.

WHITNEY *(on the way up)* Harlan, you'd better hurry up and finish your oatmeal if you want to go with me. *(Throughout breakfast FATHER has been opening and glancing through his mail. He has just reached one letter, however, that bewilders him.)*

FATHER I don't understand why I'm always getting damn fool letters like this!

VINNIE What is it, Clare?

FATHER "Dear Friend Day. We are assigning you the exclusive rights for Staten Island for selling the Gem Home Popper for popcorn—"

CLARENCE I think that's for me, Father.

FATHER Then why isn't it addressed to Clarence Day, Jr? *(He looks at the envelope.)* Oh, it is. Well, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to open your mail. *(MARGARET returns and slips a cup of coffee to the table beside FATHER.)*

VINNIE I wouldn't get mixed up in that, Clarence. People like popcorn, but they won't go all the way to Staten Island to buy it. *(FATHER has picked up the paper and is reading it. He drinks his coffee absentmindedly.)*

FATHER Chauncey Depew's having another birthday.

VINNIE How nice.

FATHER He's always having birthdays. Two or three a year. Damn! Another wreck on the New Haven!

VINNIE Yes. Oh, that reminds me. Mrs. Bailey dropped in yesterday.

FATHER Was she in the wreck?

VINNIE No. But she was born in New Haven. Clarence, you're having tea with Edith Bailey Thursday afternoon.

CLARENCE Oh, Mother, do I have to?

JOHN *(singing)* "I like coffee, I like tea. I like the girls and the girls like me."

CLARENCE Well, the girls don't like me and I don't like them.

VINNIE Edith Bailey's a very nice girl, isn't she, Clare?

FATHER Edith Bailey? Don't like her. Don't blame Clarence. *(FATHER goes to his chair by the window and sits down with his newspaper and a cigar. The others rise. HARLAN runs upstairs. ANNIE starts clearing the table and exerts with the tray of dishes a little later VINNIE speaks in a guarded tone to the two boys.)*

VINNIE Clarence, you and John go upstairs and do—what I asked you to

JOHN You said the small bureau, Mother?

VINNIE Shh! Run along
(*The boys go upstairs, somewhat unwillingly* MARGARET enters)

MARGARET If you please, ma'am, there's a package been delivered with a dollar due on it Some kitchen knives

VINNIE Oh, yes, those knives from Lewis & Conger's (*She gets her purse from the drawer in the console table and gives MARGARET a dollar*) Here, give this dollar to the man, Margaret

FATHER Make a memorandum of that, Vinnie One dollar and whatever it was for

VINNIE (*looking into purse*) Clare, dear, I'm afraid I'm going to need some more money

FATHER What for?

VINNIE You were complaining of the coffee this morning Well, that nice French drip coffeepot is broken—and you know how it got broken

FATHER (*taking out his wallet*) Never mind that Vinnie As I remember, that coffeepot cost five dollars and something Here's six dollars (*He gives her six dollars*) And when you get it, enter the exact amount in the ledger downstairs

VINNIE Thank you, Clare

FATHER We can't go on month after month having the household accounts in such a mess

VINNIE (*she sits on the arm of FATHER's chair*) No, and I've thought of a system that will make my bookkeeping perfect

FATHER I'm certainly relieved to hear that What is it?

VINNIE Well, Clare dear, you never make half the fuss over how much I've spent as you do over my not being able to remember what I've spent it for

FATHER Exactly This house must be run on a business basis That's why I insist on your keeping books

VINNIE That's the whole point, Clare All we have to do is open charge accounts everywhere and the stores will do my bookkeeping for me

FATHER Wait a minute, Vinnie—

VINNIE Then when the bills come in you'd know exactly where your money had gone

FATHER I certainly would Vinnie, I get enough bills as it is

VINNIE Yes, and those bills always help They show you just where I spent the money Now if we had charge accounts everywhere—

FATHER Now, Vinnie, I don't know about that

VINNIE Clare dear, don't you hate those arguments we have every month? I certainly do Not to have those I should think would be worth something to you

FATHER Well, I'll open an account at Lewis & Conger's—and one at McCreery's to start with—we'll see how

it works out (*He shakes his head doubtfully* *Her victory gained, VINNIE moves away*)

VINNIE Thank you, Clare Oh—the rector's coming to tea today

FATHER The rector? I'm glad you warned me I'll go to the club Don't expect me home until dinner time

VINNIE I do wish you'd take a little more interest in the church (*Goes behind FATHER's chair and looks down at him with concern*)

FATHER Vinnie, getting me into Heaven's your job If there's anything wrong with my ticket when I get there, you can fix it up Everybody loves you so much—I'm sure God must, too

VINNIE I'll do my best, Clare It wouldn't be Heaven without you

FATHER If you're there, Vinnie, I'll manage to get in some way, even if I have to climb the fence

JOHN (*from upstairs*) Mother, we've moved it Is there anything else?

FATHER What's being moved?

VINNIE Never mind, Clare I'll come right up, John (*She goes to the arch, stops Looks back at FATHER*) Oh, Clare, it's eight-thirty You don't want to be late at the office

FATHER Plenty of time (*VINNIE looks nervously toward the door, then goes upstairs FATHER returns to his newspaper VINNIE has barely disappeared when something in the paper arouses FATHER's indignation*) Oh, God!
(*VINNIE comes running downstairs*)

VINNIE What's the matter, Clare? What's wrong?

FATHER Why did God make so many damn fools and Democrats?

VINNIE (*relieved*) Oh, politics (*She goes upstairs again*)

FATHER (*shouting after her*) Yes, but it's taking the bread out of our mouths It's robbery, that's what it is, highway robbery! Honest Hugh Grant! Honest! Bah! A fine mayor you've turned out to be (*FATHER launches into a vigorous denunciation of Mayor Hugh Grant, addressing that gentleman as though he were present in the room, called upon the Day carpet to listen to FATHER's opinion of Tammany's latest attack on his pocketbook*) If you can't run this city without raising taxes every five minutes, you'd better get out and let someone who can Let me tell you, sir, that the real-estate owners of New York City are not going to tolerate these conditions any longer Tell me this—are these increased taxes going into public improvements or are they going into graft—answer me that, honestly, if you can, Mr Honest Hugh Grant You can't! I thought so Bah! (*ANNIE enters with her tray Hearing FATHER talking, she curtsies and backs into the hall, as if uncertain whether to intrude on FATHER and the Mayor VINNIE comes downstairs*) If you don't stop your plundering of the pocketbooks of the good citizens of New York, we're going to throw you and your boodle Board of Aldermen out of office

VINNIE Annie, why aren't you clearing the table?

ANNIE Mr Day's got a visitor

FATHER I'm warning you for the last time

VINNIE Oh, nonsense, he's just reading his paper, Annie Clear the table (VINNIE goes off through the arch ANNIE comes in timidly and starts to clear the table)

FATHER (still lecturing Mayor Grant) We pay you a good round sum to watch after our interests, and all we get is inefficiency! (ANNIE looks around trying to see the Mayor and, finding the room empty, assumes FATHER's remarks are directed at her) I know you're a nincompoop and I strongly suspect you of being a scalawag (ANNIE stands petrified WHITNEY comes downstairs) It's graft—that's what it is—Tammany graft—and if you're not getting it, somebody else is

WHITNEY (to FATHER) Where's John? Do you know where John is?

FATHER Dick Croker's running this town and you're just his cat's-paw (VINNIE comes in from downstairs and HARLAN comes down from upstairs FATHER goes on talking The others carry on their conversation simultaneously, ignoring FATHER and his imaginary visitor)

HARLAN Mother, where's John?

VINNIE He's upstairs, dear

FATHER And as for you, Richard Croker—don't think, just because you're hiding behind these minions you've put in public office, that you're going to escape your legal responsibilities

WHITNEY (calling upstairs) John, I'm going to take your glove!

JOHN (from upstairs) Don't you lose it! And don't let anybody else have it either!

VINNIE Annie, you should have cleared the table long ago (ANNIE loads her tray feverishly, eager to escape)

FATHER (rising and slamming down the paper in his chair) Legal responsibilities—by gad, sir, I mean criminal responsibilities (The boys start toward the front door)

VINNIE (starting upstairs) Now you watch Harlan, Whitney Don't let him be anywhere the ball can hit him Do what Whitney says, Harlan And don't be late for lunch (FATHER has reached the arch on his way out of the room, where he pauses for a final shot at Mayor Grant)

FATHER Don't forget what happened to William Marcy Tweed—and if you put our taxes up once more, we'll put you in jail! (He goes out of the archway to the left A few seconds later he is seen passing the arch toward the outer door wearing his square derby and carrying his stick and gloves The door is heard to slam loudly ANNIE seizes her tray of dishes and runs out of the arch to the left toward the basement stairs A second later there is a scream from ANNIE and a tremendous crash JOHN and CLARENCE come rushing down and look over the rail of the stairs below VINNIE follows them almost immediately)

VINNIE What is it? What happened?

CLARENCE The maid fell downstairs.

VENNIE I don't wonder, with your Father getting her so upset Why couldn't she have finished with the table before she fell downstairs?

JOHN I don't think she hurt herself

VENNIE And today of all days! Boys, will you finish the table? And, Clarence, don't leave the house until I talk to you *(She goes downstairs During the following scene CLARENCE and JOHN remove VENNIE'S best breakfast tablecloth and cram it carelessly into the drawer of the console table, then take out the extra leaves from the table, push it together, and replace the living-room table cover and the bowl of fruit)*

JOHN What do you suppose Mother wants to talk to you about

CLARENCE Oh, probably about Edith Bailey

JOHN What do you talk about when you have tea alone with a girl?

CLARENCE We don't talk about anything I say "Isn't it a nice day?" and she says "Yes," and I say "I think it's a little warmer than yesterday," and she says "Yes, I like warm weather, don't you?" and I say "Yes," and then we wait for the tea to come in And then she says "How many lumps?" and I say "Two, thank you," and she says "You must have a sweet tooth," and I can't say "Yes" and I can't say "No," so we just sit there and look at each other for half an hour Then I say "Well, it's time I was going," and she says "Must you?" and I say "I've enjoyed seeing you very much," and she says "You must come again," and I say "I will," and get out.

JOHN *(shaking his head)* Some fellows like girls

CLARENCE I don't

JOHN And did you ever notice fellows, when they get sweet on a girl—the silly things a girl can make them do? And they don't even seem to know they're acting silly

CLARENCE Well, not for Yours Truly! *(VENNIE returns from downstairs)*

VENNIE I declare I don't see how anyone could be so clumsy

CLARENCE Did she hurt herself?

VENNIE No, she's not hurt—she's just hysterical! She doesn't make sense Your father may have raised his voice, and if she doesn't know how to hold a platter properly, she deserved it—but I know he didn't threaten to put her in jail Oh, well! Clarence, I want you to move your things into the front room You'll have to sleep with the other boys for a night or two

CLARENCE You haven't told us who's coming

VENNIE *(happily)* Cousin Cora Isn't that nice?

CLARENCE It's not nice for me I can't get any sleep in there with those children

JOHN Wait'll Father finds out she's here! There'll be a rumpus

VENNIE John, don't criticize your father He's very hospitable after he gets used to the idea *(The door bell rings JOHN and VENNIE go to the window)*

JOHN Yes, it's Cousin Cora Look, there's somebody with her

VINNIE (*looking out*) She wrote me she was bringing a friend of hers They're both going to stay here (*A limping ANNIE passes through the hall*) Finish with the room, boys

CLARENCE Do I have to sleep with the other boys and have tea with Edith Bailey all in the same week?

VINNIE Yes, and you'd better take your father's suit to the tailor's right away, so it will be ready by Thursday

(VINNIE goes down the hall to greet CORA and MARY CLARENCE hurries off, carrying the table leaves)

VINNIE'S VOICE (*in the hall*) Cora dear—

CORA'S VOICE Cousin Vinnie, I'm so glad to see you! This is Mary Skinner

VINNIE'S VOICE Ed Skinner's daughter! I'm so glad to see you Leave your bags in the hall and come right upstairs

(VINNIE enters, going toward the stairs CORA follows her, but, seeing JOHN, enters the room and goes to him MARY follows CORA in timidly CORA is an attractive country cousin of about thirty MARY is a refreshingly pretty small-town girl of sixteen)

CORA (*seeing JOHN*) Well, Clarence, it's so good to see you!

VINNIE (*coming into the room*) Oh, no, that's John

CORA John! Why, how you've grown! You'll be a man before your mother! (*She laughs herself at this time-worn quip*) John, this is Mary Skin-

ner (*They exchange greetings*) Vinnie, I have so much to tell you We wrote you Aunt Carrie broke her hip That was the night Robert Ingersoll lectured Of course she couldn't get there, and it was a good thing for Mr Ingersoll she didn't (*CLARENCE enters*) And Grandpa Ebbetts hasn't been at all well

CLARENCE How do you do, Cousin Cora? I'm glad to see you

CORA This can't be Clarence!

VINNIE Yes, it is

CORA My goodness, every time I see you boys you've grown another foot Let's see—you're going to St Paul's now, aren't you?

CLARENCE (*with pained dignity*) St Paul's! I was through with St Paul's long ago I'm starting in Yale this fall

MARY Yale!

CORA Oh, Mary, this is Clarence—Mary Skinner (*MARY smiles, and CLARENCE, the woman-hater, nods politely and walks away*) This is Mary's first trip to New York She was so excited when she saw a horse car

VINNIE We'll have to show Mary around I'll tell you—I'll have Mr Day take us all to Delmonico's for dinner tonight

MARY Delmonico's!

CORA Oh, that's marvelous! Think of that, Mary—Delmonico's! And Cousin Clare's such a wonderful host

VINNIE I know you girls want to freshen up So come upstairs Clar-

ence, I'll let the girls use your room now, and when they've finished you can move, and bring up their bags. They're out in the hall (*Starts upstairs with CORA*) I've given you girls Clarence's room, but he didn't know about it until this morning and he hasn't moved out yet.

(*VINNIE and CORA disappear upstairs. MARY follows more slowly and on the second step stops and looks back. CLARENCE has gone into the hall with his back toward MARY and stares morosely in the direction of their luggage.*)

CLARENCE John, get their old bags (*JOHN disappears toward the front door. The voices of VINNIE and CORA*

have trailed off into the upper reaches of the house. CLARENCE turns to scowl in their direction and finds himself looking full into the face of MARY.)

MARY Cora didn't tell me about you. I never met a Yale man before (*She gives him a devastating smile and with an audible whinny of girlish excitement she runs upstairs. CLARENCE stares after her a few seconds, then turns toward the audience with a look of "What happened to me just then?" Suddenly, however, his face breaks into a smile which indicates that, whatever has happened, he likes it.*)

CURTAIN

SCENE II

The same day. Tea time.

VINNIE and the RECTOR are having tea. THE REVEREND DR LLOYD is a plump, bustling man, very good-hearted and pleasant. VINNIE and DR LLOYD have one strong point in common: their devotion to the Church and its rituals. VINNIE's devotion comes from her natural piety, DR LLOYD's is a little more professional.

At rise, DR LLOYD is seated with a cup of tea. VINNIE is also seated and WHITNEY is standing next to her, stiffly erect in the manner of a boy reciting. HARLAN is seated next to his mother, watching WHITNEY's performance.

WHITNEY (*reciting*) "—to worship Him, to give Him thanks, to put my whole trust in Him, to call upon Him—" (*He hesitates.*)

VINNIE (*prompting*) "—to honor—"

WHITNEY "—to honor His Holy Name and His word and to serve Him truly all the days of my life."

DR LLOYD "What is thy duty toward thy neighbor?"

WHITNEY Whew! (*He pulls himself together and makes a brave start.*) "My duty toward my neighbor is to love him as myself, and to do to all men as I would they should do unto me, to love, honor, and succor my

father and my mother, to honor and obey—"

VINNIE "—civil authorities"

WHITNEY "—civil authorities To—to—to—"

VINNIE (to DR LLOYD) He really knows it

WHITNEY I know most of the others

DR LLOYD Well, he's done very well for so young a boy I'm sure if he applies himself between now and Sunday I could hear him again—with the others

VINNIE There, Whitney, you'll have to study very hard if you want Dr Lloyd to send your name in to Bishop Potter next Sunday I must confess to you, Dr Lloyd, it's really my fault Instead of hearing Whitney say his catechism this morning I let him play baseball

WHITNEY We won, too, 35 to 27

DR LLOYD That's splendid, my child I'm glad your side won But winning over your catechism is a richer and fuller victory

WHITNEY Can I go now?

VINNIE Yes, darling Thank Dr Lloyd for hearing you and run along

WHITNEY Thank you, Dr Lloyd

DR LLOYD Not at all, my little man (WHITNEY starts out, turns back, takes a piece of cake and runs out)

VINNIE Little Harlan is very apt at learning things by heart

HARLAN (*scrambling to his feet*) I can spell Constantinople Want to hear me? (DR LLOYD smiles his assent) C-o-ennaconny — annaconny — sissaconny — tan-tan-tee — and a nople and a pople and a Constantinople!

DR LLOYD Very well done, my child

VINNIE (*handing him a cake from the tea tray*) That's nice, darling This is what you get for saying it so well (HARLAN quickly looks at the cake and back to DR LLOYD)

HARLAN Want me to say it again for you?

VINNIE No, darling One cake is enough You run along and play with Whitney

HARLAN I can spell "huckleberry pie"

VINNIE Run along, dear (HARLAN goes out, skipping in rhythm to his recitation)

HARLAN H-a-huckle — b-a-buckle — h-a-huckle-high H-a-huckle — b-a-buckle—huckleberry pie!

DR LLOYD (*amused*) You and Mr Day must be very proud of your children (VINNIE beams) I was hoping I'd find Mr Day at home this afternoon

VINNIE (*evasively*) Well, he's usually home from the office by this time

DR LLOYD Perhaps he's gone for a gallop in the park—it's such a fine day He's very fond of horseback riding. I believe

VINNIE Oh, yes

DR LLOYD Tell me—has he ever been thrown from a horse?

VINNIE Oh, no! No horse would throw Mr Day

DR LLOYD I've wondered I thought he might have had an accident I notice he never kneels in church

VINNIE Oh, that's no accident! But I don't want you to think he doesn't pray He does Why, sometimes you can hear him pray all over the house But he never kneels

DR LLOYD Never kneels! Dear me! I was hoping to have the opportunity to tell you and Mr Day about our plans for the new edifice

VINNIE I'm so glad we're going to have a new church

DR LLOYD I'm happy to announce that we're now ready to proceed The only thing left to do is raise the money

VINNIE No one should hesitate about contributing to that (*The front door slams*)

DR LLOYD Perhaps that's Mr Day now

VINNIE Oh, no, I hardly think so (*FATHER appears in the archway*) Why, it is!

CLARENCE Oh, damn! I forgot

VINNIE Clare, you're just in time Dr Lloyd's here for tea

FATHER I'll be right in (*He disappears the other side of the archway*)

VINNIE I'll send for some fresh tea (*She goes to the bellpull and rings for the maid*)

DR LLOYD Now we can tell Mr Day about our plans for the new edifice

VINNIE (*knowing her man*) After he's had his tea (*FATHER comes back into the room DR LLOYD rises*)

FATHER How are you, Dr Lloyd? (*CLARENCE comes down the stairs and eagerly looks around for MARY*)

CLARENCE Oh, it was Father

DR LLOYD Very well, thank you (*They shake hands*)

CLARENCE (*to VINNIE*) They're not back yet?

VINNIE No! Clarence, no! (*CLARENCE turns, disappointed, and goes back upstairs*)

DR LLOYD It's a great pleasure to have a visit with you, Mr Day Except for a fleeting glimpse on the Sabbath, I don't see much of you. (*FATHER grunts and sits down. DELIA, a new maid, enters*)

DELIA Yes, ma'am

VINNIE Some fresh tea and a cup for Mr Day (*DELIA exits and VINNIE hurries down to the tea table to start the conversation*) Well, Clare, did you have a busy day at the office?

FATHER Damn busy

VINNIE Clare!

FATHER Very busy day Tired out

VINNIE I've ordered some fresh tea (To DR LLOYD) Poor Clare, he must work very hard. He always comes home tired. Although how a man can get tired just sitting at his desk all day, I don't know. I suppose Wall Street is just as much a mystery to you as it is to me, Dr. Lloyd.

DR LLOYD No, no, it's all very clear to me. My mind often goes to the business man. The picture I'm most fond of is when I envision him at the close of the day's work. There he sits—this hard-headed man of affairs—surrounded by the ledgers that he has been studying closely and harshly for hours. I see him pausing in his toil—and by chance he raises his eyes and looks out of the window at the light in God's sky and it comes over him that money and ledgers are dross. (FATHER stares at DR LLOYD with some amazement.) He realizes that all those figures of profit and loss are without importance or consequence—vanity and dust. And I see this troubled man bow his head and with streaming eyes resolve to devote his life to far higher things.

FATHER Well, I'll be damned! (At this moment DELIA returns with the fresh tea for FATHER.)

VINNIE Here's your tea, Clare. (FATHER notices the new maid.)

FATHER Who's this?

VINNIE (quietly) The new maid.

FATHER Where's the one we had this morning?

VINNIE Never mind, Clare.

FATHER The one we had this morning was prettier. (DELIA, with a slight

resentment, exits. FATHER attacks the tea and cakes with relish.) Vinnie, these cakes are good.

DR LLOYD Delicious!

VINNIE Dr. Lloyd wants to tell us about the plans for the new edifice.

FATHER The new what?

VINNIE The new church—Clare, you knew we were planning to build a new church.

DR LLOYD Of course, we're going to have to raise a large sum of money.

FATHER (alive to the danger) Well, personally I'm against the church hopping-and-jumping all over the town. And it so happens that during the last year I've suffered heavy losses in the market—damned heavy losses—

VINNIE Clare!

FATHER—so any contribution I make will have to be a small one.

VINNIE But, Clare, for so worthy a cause!

FATHER—and if your Finance Committee thinks it's too small they can blame the rascals that are running the New Haven Railroad!

DR LLOYD The amount everyone is to subscribe has already been decided.

FATHER (bristling) Who decided it?

DR LLOYD After considerable thought we've found a formula which we believe is fair and equitable. It apportions the burden lightly on

those least able to carry it and justly on those whose shoulders we know are stronger. We've voted that our supporting members should each contribute a sum equal to the cost of their pews (FATHER'S jaw drops)

FATHER I paid five thousand dollars for my pew!

VINNIE Yes, Clare. That makes our contribution five thousand dollars.

FATHER That's robbery! Do you know what that pew is worth today? Three thousand dollars. That's what the last one sold for. I've taken a dead loss of two thousand dollars on that pew already. Frank Baggs sold me that pew when the market was at its peak. He knew when to get out. (He turns to VINNIE) And I'm warning you now that if the market ever goes up I'm going to unload that pew.

VINNIE Clarence Day! How can you speak of the Lord's temple as though it were something to be bought and sold on Wall Street?

FATHER Vinnie, this is a matter of dollars and cents, and that's something you don't know anything about!

VINNIE You talking of religion in terms of dollars and cents seems to me pretty close to blasphemy.

DR LLOYD (soothingly) Now, Mrs. Day, your husband is a business man and he has a practical approach toward this problem. We've had to be practical about it too—we have all the facts and figures.

FATHER Oh, really! What's the new piece of property going to cost you?

DR LLOYD I think the figure I've heard mentioned is eighty-five thousand dollars—or was it a hundred and eighty-five thousand dollars?

FATHER What's the property worth where we are now?

DR LLOYD Well, there's quite a difference of opinion about that.

FATHER How much do you have to raise to build the new church?

DR LLOYD Now, I've seen those figures—let me see—I know it depends somewhat upon the amount of the mortgage.

FATHER Mortgage, eh? What are the terms of the amortization?

DR LLOYD Amortization? That's not a word I'm familiar with.

FATHER It all seems pretty vague and unsound to me. I certainly wouldn't let any customer of mine invest on what I've heard. (The doorbell rings.)

DR LLOYD We've given it a great deal of thought. I don't see how you can call it vague. (DELIA passes along the hall toward the front door.)

FATHER Dr. Lloyd, you preach that some day we'll all have to answer to God.

DR LLOYD We shall indeed!

FATHER Well, I hope God doesn't ask you any questions with figures in them.

(CORA'S VOICE is heard in the hall, thanking DELIA. VINNIE goes to the arch just in time to meet CORA and

MARY *as they enter, heavily laden with packages, which they put down*
FATHER and DR LLOYD rise)

CORA, Oh Vinnie, what a day! We've been to every shop in town and—
(She sees FATHER) Cousin Clare!

FATHER (*cordially*) Cora, what are you doing in New York?

CORA We're just passing through on our way to Springfield

FATHER We? (CLARENCE comes downstairs into the room with eyes only for MARY)

VINNIE Oh, Dr Lloyd, this is my favorite cousin, Miss Cartwright, and her friend, Mary Skinner (They exchange mutual how-do-you-do's)

DR LLOYD This seems to be a family reunion I'll just run along

FATHER (*promptly*) Goodbye, Dr Lloyd

DR LLOYD Goodbye, Miss Cartwright Goodbye, Miss—er—

VINNIE Clarence, you haven't said how-do-you-do to Dr Lloyd

CLARENCE Goodbye, Dr Lloyd

VINNIE (to DR LLOYD) I'll go to the door with you (DR LLOYD and VINNIE go out, talking)

FATHER Cora, you're as welcome as the flowers in May! Have some tea with us (To DELIA) Bring some fresh tea—and some more of those cakes

CORA Oh, we've had tea! We were so tired shopping we had tea down-

town (With a gesture FATHER countermands his order to DELIA, who removes the tea table and exits)

MARY At the Fifth Avenue Hotel

FATHER At the Fifth Avenue Hotel, eh? Who'd you say this pretty little girl was?

CORA She's Ed Skinner's daughter Well, Mary, at last you've met Mr Day I've told Mary so much about you, Cousin Clare, that she's just been dying to meet you

FATHER Well, sit down! Sit down! Even if you have had tea you can stop and visit for a while As a matter of fact, why don't you both stay to dinner? (VINNIE enters just in time to hear this and cuts in quickly)

VINNIE That's all arranged, Clare Cora and Mary are going to have dinner with us

FATHER That's fine! That's fine!

CORA Cousin Clare, I don't know how to thank you and Vinnie for your hospitality

MARY Yes, Mr Day

FATHER Well, you'll just have to take pot luck

CORA No, I mean—
(VINNIE speaks quickly to postpone the revelation that FATHER has house guests)

VINNIE Clare, did you know the girls are going to visit Aunt Judith in Springfield for a whole month?

FATHER That's fine How long are you going to be in New York, Cora?

CORA All week

(We hear a faint "All right" from upstairs)

FATHER Splendid We'll hope to see something of you, eh, Vinnie? (CORA looks bewildered and is about to speak)

FATHER (his voice is low but stern). Are those two women encamped in this house?

VINNIE Did you find anything you wanted in the shops?

VINNIE Now, Clare!

CORA Just everything

FATHER (much louder) Answer me, Vinnie!

VINNIE I want to see what you got

CORA I just can't wait to show you (She goes coyly to FATHER) But I'm afraid some of the packages can't be opened in front of Cousin Clare

VINNIE Just a minute—control yourself, Clare (VINNIE, sensing the coming storm, hurries to the sliding doors CLARENCE has reached the hall with his packages and he, too, has recognized the danger signal and as VINNIE closes one door he closes the other, leaving himself out in the hall and FATHER and VINNIE facing each other in the room)

FATHER Shall I leave the room? (Laughs at his own joke)

VINNIE (persuasively) Now, Clare, you know you've always liked Cora

CORA Clarence, do you mind taking the packages up to our room—or should I say your room? (To FATHER) Wasn't it nice of Clarence to give up his room to us for a whole week?

FATHER (exploding) What has that got to do with her planking herself down in my house and bringing hordes of strangers with her?

FATHER (with a sudden drop in temperature) Vinnie!

VINNIE (reproachfully) How can you call that sweet little girl a horde of strangers?

VINNIE Come on, Cora, I just can't wait to see what's in those packages (CORA, MARY, and VINNIE start out CLARENCE is gathering up the packages)

FATHER Why don't they go to a hotel? New York is full of hotels built for the express purpose of housing such nuisances

FATHER (ominously) Vinnie, I wish to speak to you before you go upstairs

VINNIE I'll be down in just a minute, Clare

VINNIE Clare! Two girls alone in a hotel! Who knows what might happen to them?

FATHER I wish to speak to you now! (The girls have disappeared upstairs)

VINNIE I'll be up in just a minute, Cora

FATHER All right Then put 'em on the next train If they want to roam—the damned gypsies—lend 'em a hand! Keep 'em roaming!

VINNIE What have we got a home for if we can't show a little hospitality?

FATHER I didn't buy this home to show hospitality—I bought it for my own comfort!

VINNIE Well, how much are they going to interfere with your comfort living in that little room of Clarence's?

FATHER The trouble is, damn it, they don't live there. They live in the bathroom! Every time I want to take my bath it's full of giggling females—washing their hair. From the time they take, you'd think it was the Seven Sutherland Sisters. I tell you, I won't have it! Send 'em to a hotel. I'll pay the bill gladly, but get them out of here!

(CLARENCE puts his head through the sliding door)

CLARENCE Father, I'm afraid they can hear you upstairs.

FATHER Then keep those doors closed!

VINNIE (with decision) Clarence, you open those doors—open them all the way! (CLARENCE does so)

VINNIE (to FATHER, lowering her voice, but maintaining her spirit) Now, Clare, you behave yourself! (FATHER glares at her angrily) They're here and they're going to stay here.

FATHER That enough, Vinnie! I want no more of this argument. (He goes to his chair by the window, muttering.) Damnation!

CLARENCE (to VINNIE), Mother, Cousin Cora's waiting for you.

FATHER What I don't understand is why this swarm of locusts always descends on us without any warning. (He sits down. VINNIE looks at him, then, convinced of her victory, she goes upstairs.) Damn! Damnation! Damn! (He follows her upstairs with his eyes, he remembers he is very fond of her.) Vinnie! Dear Vinnie! (He remembers he is very angry at her.) Damn!

CLARENCE Father, can't I go along with the rest of you to Delmonico's tonight?

FATHER What's that? Delmonico's?

CLARENCE You're taking Mother, Cora, and Mary to Delmonico's for dinner.

FATHER (exploding) Oh, God! (At this sound from FATHER, VINNIE comes flying downstairs again.) I won't have it. I won't have it. (FATHER stamps angrily across the room.)

VINNIE (on the way down) Clarence, the doors!

FATHER I won't stand it, by God! I won't stand it! (VINNIE and CLARENCE hurriedly close the sliding doors again.)

VINNIE Clare! What's the matter now?

FATHER (with the calm of anger that has turned to ice) Do I understand that I can't have dinner in my own home?

VINNIE It'll do us both good to get out of this house. You need a little change. It'll make you feel better.

FATHER I have a home to have dinner in Any time I can't have dinner at home this house is for sale!

VINNIE Well, you can't have dinner here tonight because it isn't ordered

FATHER Let me tell you I'm ready to sell this place this very minute if I can't live here in peace And we can all go and sit under a palm tree and live on breadfruit and pickles

VINNIE But, Clare, Cora and Mary want to see something of New York

FATHER Oh, that's it! Well, that's no affair of mine! I am not a guide to Chinatown and the Bowery (*Drawing himself up, he stalks out, throwing open the sliding doors As he reaches the foot of the stairs, MARY comes tripping down*)

MARY I love your house, Mr Day I could just live here forever (FATHER utters a bark of disgust and continues on upstairs MARY comes into the room a little wide-eyed) Cora's waiting for you, Mrs Day

VINNIE Oh, yes, I'll run right up (*She goes upstairs*)

CLARENCE I'm glad you like our house

MARY Oh, yes, I like it very much I like green

CLARENCE I like green myself (*She looks up at his red hair*)

MARY Red's my favorite color (*Embarrassed, CLARENCE suddenly hears himself talking about something he has never thought about*)

CLARENCE It's an interesting thing about colors Red's a nice color in a

house, too, but outside, too much red would be bad I mean, for instance, if all the trees and the grass were red Outside, green is the best color

MARY (*impressed*) That's right! I've never thought of it that way—but when you do think of it, it's quite a thought! I'll bet you'll make your mark at Yale

CLARENCE (*pleased, but modest*) Oh! (*The outer door is heard to slam*)

MARY My mother wants me to go to college Do you believe in girls going to college?

CLARENCE I guess it's all right if they want to waste that much time—before they get mairned, I mean (*JOHN comes in, bringing The Youth's Companion*)

JOHN Oh, hello! Look! A new Youth's Companion! (*They say "Hello" to him*)

CLARENCE (*from a mature height*). John enjoys *The Youth's Companion*. (*JOHN sits right down and starts to read CLARENCE is worried by this*) John! (*JOHN looks at him non-plussed*) CLARENCE glances toward MARY JOHN remembers his manners and stands CLARENCE speaks formally to MARY) Won't you sit down?

MARY Oh, thank you! (*She sits JOHN sits down again quickly and dives back into The Youth's Companion CLARENCE sits beside MARY*)

CLARENCE As I was saying—I think it's all right for a girl to go to college if she goes to a girls' college

MARY Well, Mother wants me to go to Ohio Wesleyan—because it's Methodist (*Then almost as a confession*) You see, we're Methodists

CLARENCE Oh, that's too bad! I don't mean it's too bad that you're a Methodist Anybody's got a right to be anything they want But what I mean is—we're Episcopalians

MARY Yes, I know I've known ever since I saw your minister—and his collar (*She looks pretty sad for a minute and then her face brightens*) Oh, I just remembered—my father was an Episcopalian He was baptized an Episcopalian He was an Episcopalian right up to the time he married my mother *She was the Methodist (MARY's tone would have surprised her mother—and even MARY, if she had been listening)*

CLARENCE I'll bet your father's a nice man

MARY Yes, he is He owns the livery stable

CLARENCE He does? Well, then you must like horses

MARY Oh, I love horses! (*They are happily united again in their common love of horses*)

CLARENCE They're my favorite animal Father and I both think there's nothing like a horse! (*FATHER comes down the stairs and into the room The children all stand*)

MARY Oh, Mr Day, I'm having such a lovely time here!

FATHER Clarence is keeping you entertained, eh?

MARY Oh, yes, sir We've been talking about everything—colors and horses and religion

FATHER Oh! (*To JOHN*) Has the evening paper come yet?

JOHN No, sir

FATHER What are you reading?

JOHN *The Youth's Companion*, sir (*WHITNEY and HARLAN enter from the hall, WHITNEY carrying a small box*)

WHITNEY Look what we've got!

FATHER What is it?

WHITNEY Tiddle-dy-winks We put our money together and bought it

FATHER That's a nice game Do you know how to play it?

WHITNEY I've played it lots of times

HARLAN Show me how to play it

FATHER Here, I'll show you (*Opens the box and arranges the glass and disks*)

MARY (*hopefully to CLARENCE*) Are you going out to dinner with us to-night?

CLARENCE (*looking at FATHER*) I don't know yet—but it's beginning to look as though I might

FATHER It's easy, Harlan You press down like this and snap the little fellow into the glass Now watch me—(*He snaps it and it goes off the table*) The table isn't quite large enough You boys better play it on the floor

WHITNEY Come on, Harlan, I'll take the reds, and you take the yellows

FATHER John, have you practiced your piano today?

JOHN I was going to practice this evening

FATHER Better do it now Music is a delight in the home

(JOHN exits, passing CORA and VINNIE as they enter, coming downstairs)

VINNIE Clare, what do you think Cora just told me? She and Clyde are going to be married this fall!

FATHER Oh, you finally landed him, eh? *(Everybody laughs)* Well, he's a very lucky man Cora, being married is the only way to live

CORA If we can be half as happy as you and Cousin Vinnie—

VINNIE *(who has gone to the children)* Boys, shouldn't you be playing that on the table?

WHITNEY The table isn't big enough Father told us to play on the floor

VINNIE My soul and body! Look at your hands! Delia will have your supper ready in a few minutes Go wash your hands right away and come back and show Mother they're clean *(The boys pick up the tiddle-ty-winks and depart reluctantly From the next room we hear JOHN playing "The Happy Farmer")*

FATHER *(sitting down on the sofa with MARY)* Vinnie, this young lady looks about the same age you were when I came out to Pleasantville to rescue you

VINNIE Rescue me! You came out there to talk me into marrying you

FATHER It worked out just the same I saved you from spending the rest of your life in that one-horse town

VINNIE Cora, the other day I came across a tintype of Clare taken in Pleasantville I want to show it to you You'll see who needed rescuing *(She goes to the table and starts to rummage around in its drawer)*

FATHER There isn't time for that, Vinnie If we're going to Delmonico's for dinner hadn't we all better be getting ready? It's after six now

CORA Gracious! I'll have to start If I'm going to dine in public with a prominent citizen like you, Cousin Clare—I'll have to look my best *(She goes to the arch)*

MARY I've changed already

CORA Yes, I know, but I'm afraid I'll have to ask you to come along and hook me up, Mary

MARY Of course

CORA It won't take a minute and then you can come right back *(FATHER rises MARY crosses in front of FATHER and starts toward the hall, then turns and looks back at him)*

MARY Mr Day, were you always an Episcopalian?

FATHER What?

MARY Were you always an Episcopalian?

FATHER I've always gone to the Episcopal church, yes

MARY But you weren't baptized a Methodist or anything, were you? You were baptized an Episcopalian?

FATHER Come to think of it, I don't believe I was ever baptized at all

MARY Oh!

VINNIE Clare, that's not very funny, joking about a subject like that

FATHER I'm not joking—I remember now—I never was baptized

VINNIE Clare, that's ridiculous, everyone's baptized

FATHER (*sitting down complacently*) Well, I'm not

VINNIE Why, no one would keep a little baby from being baptized

FATHER You know Father and Mother—free-thinkers, both of them—believed their children should decide those things for themselves

VINNIE But, Clare—

FATHER I remember when I was ten or twelve years old, Mother said I ought to give some thought to it. I suppose I thought about it, but I never got around to having it done to me
(*The shock to VINNIE is as great as if FATHER had calmly announced himself guilty of murder. She walks to FATHER staring at him in horror. CORA and MARY, sensing the coming battle, withdraw to the neutral shelter of the hall*)

VINNIE Clare, do you know what you're saying?

FATHER I'm saying I've never been baptized

VINNIE (*in a sudden panic*) Then something has to be done about it right away

FATHER (*not the least concerned*) Now, Vinnie, don't get excited over nothing

VINNIE Nothing! (*Then, as only a woman can ask such a question*) Clare, why haven't you ever told me?

FATHER What difference does it make?

VINNIE (*the panic returning*) I've never heard of anyone who wasn't baptized. Even the savages in darkest Africa—

FATHER It's all right for savages and children. But if an oversight was made in my case it's too late to correct it now

VINNIE But if you're not baptized you're not a Christian!

FATHER (*rising in wrath*) Why, confound it, of course I'm a Christian! A damn good Christian, too!
(*FATHER'S voice tells CLARENCE a major engagement has begun. He hurriedly springs to the sliding doors and closes them, removing himself, MARY, and CORA from the scene of action*) A lot better Christian than those psalm-singing donkeys in church!

VINNIE You can't be if you won't be baptized

FATHER I won't be baptized and I will be a Christian! I beg to inform you I'll be a Christian in my own way

VINNIE Clare, don't you want to meet us all in Heaven?

FATHER Of course! And I'm going to!

VINNIE But you can't go to Heaven if you're not baptized!

FATHER That's a lot of folderol!

VINNIE Clarence Day, don't you blaspheme like that! You're coming to church with me before you go to the office in the morning and be baptized then and there!

FATHER Vinnie, don't be ridiculous! If you think I'm going to stand there and have some minister splash water on me at my age, you're mistaken!

VINNIE But, Clare—

FATHER That's enough of this, Vinnie I'm hungry (Draws himself up and starts for the door He does not realize that he and VINNIE are now engaged in a battle to the

death) I'm dressing for dinner (Throws open the doors, revealing WHITNEY and HARLAN, who obviously have been eavesdropping and have heard the awful revelation of FATHER's paganism FATHER stalks past them upstairs The two boys come down into the room staring at their mother, who has been standing, too shocked at FATHER's callous impiety to speak or move)

WHITNEY Mother, if Father hasn't been baptized he hasn't any name In the sight of the Church he hasn't any name

VINNIE That's right! (To herself) Maybe we're not even married! (This awful thought takes possession of VINNIE Her eyes turn slowly toward the children and she suddenly realizes their doubtful status Her hand goes to her mouth to cover a quick gasp of horror as the curtain falls)

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE I

The Same

The following Sunday After church

The stage is empty as the curtain rises VINNIE comes into the archway from the street door, dressed in her Sunday best, carrying her prayer book, hymnal, and a cold indignation As soon as she is in the room, FATHER passes across the hall in his Sunday cutaway and silk hat, carrying gloves and cane VINNIE looks over her shoulder at him as he disappears CORA, WHITNEY, and HARLAN come into the room, CORA glancing after FATHER and then toward VINNIE All three walk as though the sound of a footfall might cause an explosion, and speak in subdued tones

HARLAN Cousin Cora, will you play a game of tiddle-dy-winks with me before you go?

CORA I'm going to be busy packing until it's time to leave

WHITNEY We can't play games on Sunday

(We hear the door close and JOHN enters and looks into the room apprehensively)

CORA John, where are Clarence and Mary?

JOHN They dropped behind—'way behind! (He goes upstairs. WHITNEY takes HARLAN's hat from him and starts toward the arch.)

VINNIE Whitney, don't hang up your hat I want you to go over to Sherry's for the ice cream for dinner Tell Mr Sherry strawberry—if he has it And take Harlan with you.

WHITNEY All right, Mother (He and HARLAN, trained in the good manners of the period, bow and exit)

CORA Oh, Vinnie, I hate to leave We've had such a lovely week

VINNIE (voice quivers in a tone of scandalized apology) Cora, what must you think of Clare, making such a scene on his way out of church today?

CORA Cousin Clare probably thinks that you put the rector up to preaching that sermon

VINNIE (tone changes from apology to self-defense with overtones of guilt) Well, I had to go to see Dr Lloyd to find out whether we were

really married The sermon on baptism was his own idea If Clare just hadn't shouted so—now the whole congregation knows he's never been baptized! But he's going to be, Cora—you mark my words—he's going to be! I just couldn't go to Heaven without Clare Why, I get lonesome for him when I go to Ohio

(FATHER enters holding his watch He's also holding his temper He speaks quietly)

FATHER Vinnie, I went to the dining-room and the table isn't set for dinner yet

VINNIE We're having dinner late today

FATHER Why can't I have my meals on time?

VINNIE The girls' train leaves at one-thirty Their cab's coming at one o'clock

FATHER Cab? The horse cars go right past our door

VINNIE They have those heavy bags

FATHER Clarence and John could have gone along to carry their bags Cabs are just a waste of money Why didn't we have an early dinner?

VINNIE There wasn't time for an early dinner and church, too

FATHER As far as I'm concerned this would have been a good day to miss church

VINNIE (spiritedly) I wish we had!

FATHER (flaring) I'll bet you put him up to preaching that sermon!

VINNIE I've never been so mortified in all my life! You stamping up the aisle roaring your head off at the top of your voice!

FATHER That Lloyd needn't preach at me as though I were some damn criminal! I wanted him to know it, and as far as I'm concerned the whole congregation can know it, too!

VINNIE They certainly know it now!

FATHER That suits me!

VINNIE (*pleading*) Clare, you don't seem to understand what the church is for

FATHER (*laying down a new Commandment*) Vinnie, if there's one place the church should leave alone, it's a man's soul!

VINNIE Clare, dear, don't you believe what it says in the Bible?

FATHER A man has to use his common sense about the Bible, Vinnie, if he has any. For instance, you'd be in a pretty fix if I gave all my money to the poor

VINNIE Well, that's just silly!

FATHER Speaking of money—where are this month's bills?

VINNIE Clare, it isn't fair to go over the household accounts while you're hungry

FATHER Where are those bills, Vinnie?

VINNIE They're downstairs on your desk (*FATHER exits almost eagerly* Figures are something he understands better than he does women) Of all

times! (*To CORA*) It's awfully hard on a woman to love a man like Clare so much

CORA Yes, men can be aggravating. Clyde gets me so provoked! We kept company for six years, but the minute he proposed—the moment I said "Yes"—he began to take me for granted

VINNIE You have to expect that, Cora. I don't believe Clare has come right out and told me he loves me since we've been married. Of course I know he does, because I keep reminding him of it. You have to keep reminding them, Cora (*The door slams*)

CORA That must be Mary and Clarence (*There's a moment's pause* The two women look toward the hall—then at each other with a knowing sort of smile. CORA rises, goes up to the arch, peeks out—then faces front and innocently asks) Is that you, Mary?

MARY (*dashing in*) Yes! (*CLARENCE crosses the arch to hang up his hat*)

CORA We have to change our clothes and finish our packing (*Goes upstairs*) (*CLARENCE returns as MARY starts up the stairs*)

MARY (*to CLARENCE*) It won't take me long

CLARENCE Can I help you pack?

VINNIE (*shocked*) Clarence! (*MARY runs upstairs* CLARENCE drifts into the living-room, somewhat abashed. VINNIE collects her hat and gloves, starts out *stops to look at CLARENCE,*

then comes down to him) Clarence, why didn't you kneel in church today?

CLARENCE What, Mother?

VINNIE Why didn't you kneel in church today?

CLARENCE (*troubled*) I just couldn't

VINNIE Has it anything to do with Mary? I know she's a Methodist

CLARENCE Oh, no, Mother! Methodists kneel Mary told me They don't get up and down so much, but they stay down longer

VINNIE If it's because your father doesn't kneel—you must remember he wasn't brought up to kneel in church But you were—you always have—and, Clarence, you want to, don't you?

CLARENCE Oh, yes! I wanted to today! I started to—you saw me start—but I just couldn't

VINNIE Is that suit of your father's too tight for you?

CLARENCE No, it's not too tight It fits fine But it is the suit Very peculiar things have happened to me since I started to wear it I haven't been myself since I put it on

VINNIE In what way, Clarence? How do you mean?

(CLARENCE *pauses, then blurts out his problem*)

CLARENCE Mother, I can't seem to make these clothes do anything Father wouldn't do!

VINNIE That's nonsense, Clarence—and not to kneel in church is a sacrilege

CLARENCE But making Father's trousers kneel seemed more of a sacrilege

VINNIE Clarence!

CLARENCE No! Remember the first time I wore this? It was at Dora Wakefield's party for Mary Do you know what happened? We were playing musical chairs and Dora Wakefield sat down suddenly right in my lap I jumped up so fast she almost got hurt

VINNIE But it was all perfectly innocent

CLARENCE It wasn't that Dora was sitting on my lap—she was sitting on Father's trousers Mother, I've got to have a suit of my own (CLARENCE'S *metaphysical problem is one that VINNIE can't cope with at this particular minute*)

VINNIE My soul and body! Clarence, you have a talk with your father about it I'm sure if you approach him the right way—you know—tactfully—he'll see—

(MARY *comes downstairs and hesitates at the arch*)

MARY Oh, excuse me

VINNIE Gracious! Have you finished your packing?

MARY Practically I never put my comb and brush in until I'm ready to close my bag

VINNIE I must see Margaret about your box lunch for the train I'll

leave you two together Remember, it's Sunday (*She goes downstairs*)

CLARENCE Give me your hand, found it! (*MARY gives it to him*)

CLARENCE I was hoping we could have a few minutes together before you left

MARY What do you want with my hand?

MARY (*not to admit her eagerness*) Cora had so much to do I wanted to get out of her way

CLARENCE I just wanted it (*Holding her hand, he melts a little and smiles at her She melts, too Their hands, clasped together, are resting on CLARENCE's knee and they relax happily*) What are you dinking about?

CLARENCE Well, didn't you want to see me?

MARY I was just thinking

MARY (*self-consciously*) I did want to tell you how much I've enjoyed our friendship

CLARENCE About what?

CLARENCE You're going to write me when you get to Springfield, aren't you?

MARY Well, when we were talking about writing each other I was hoping you'd write me first because that would mean you liked me

MARY Of course, if you write me first

CLARENCE (*with the logic of the male*) What's writing first got to do with my liking you?

CLARENCE But you'll have something to write about—your trip—and Aunt Judith—and how things are in Springfield You write me as soon as you get there

MARY Oh, you *do* like me?

MARY Maybe I'll be too busy Maybe I won't have time (*She sits on the sofa*)

CLARENCE Of course I do I like you better than any girl I ever met

CLARENCE (*with the authority of FATHER's trousers*) You find the time! Let's not have any nonsense about that! You'll write me first—and you'll do it right away, the first day! (*Sits beside her*)

MARY (*with the logic of the female*) But you don't like me well enough to write first?

CLARENCE I don't *see* how one thing's got anything to do with the other

MARY How do you know I'll take orders from you?

MARY But a girl can't write first—because she's a *girl*!

CLARENCE I'll show you (*He takes a quick glance toward the hall*) Give me your hand!

CLARENCE That doesn't make sense If a girl has something to write about and a fellow hasn't, there's no reason why she shouldn't write first

MARY Why should I?

MARY (*starting a flanking movement*) You know, the first few days I was here you'd do anything for me and then you changed. You used to be a lot of fun—and then all of a sudden you turned into an old sober-sides

CLARENCE When did I?

MARY The first time I noticed it was when we walked home from Dora Wakefield's party. My, you were on your dignity! You've been that way ever since. You even dress like an old sober-sides. (CLARENCE's face changes as FATHER's pants rise to haunt him. Then he notices that their clasped hands are resting on these very pants, and he lifts them off. Agony obviously is setting in. MARY sees the expression on his face.) What's the matter?

CLARENCE I just happened to remember something.

MARY What? (CLARENCE doesn't answer, but his face does.) Oh, I know. This is the last time we'll be together. (She puts her hand on his shoulder. He draws away.)

CLARENCE Mary, please!

MARY But, Clarence! We'll see each other in a month. And we'll be writing each other, too. I hope we will. (She gets up.) Oh, Clarence, please write me first, because it will show me how much you like me. Please! I'll show you how much I like you! (She throws herself on his lap and buries her head on his shoulder. CLARENCE stiffens in agony.)

CLARENCE (hoarsely) Get up! Get up! (She pulls back her head and

looks at him, then springs from his lap and runs away, covering her face and sobbing. CLARENCE goes to her.) Don't do that, Mary! Please don't do that!

MARY Now you'll think I'm just a bold and forward girl.

CLARENCE Oh, no.

MARY Yes, you will—you'll think I'm bold!

CLARENCE Oh, no—it's not that.

MARY (hopefully) Was it because it's Sunday?

CLARENCE (in despair) No, it would be the same any day— (He is about to explain, but MARY flares.)

MARY Oh, it's just because you didn't want me sitting on your lap.

CLARENCE It was nice of you to do it.

MARY It was nice of me! So you told me to get up! You just couldn't bear to have me sit there. Well, you needn't write me first. You needn't write me any letters at all, because I'll tear them up without opening them! (FATHER enters the archway, a sheath of bills in his hand and his account book under his arm.) I guess I know now you don't like me! I never want to see you again. I—I— (She breaks and starts to run toward the stairs. At the sight of FATHER she stops, but only for a gasp, then continues on upstairs, unable to control her sobs. CLARENCE, who has been standing in unhappy indecision, turns to follow her, but stops short at the sight of FATHER, who is standing in the arch looking at him with

some amazement FATHER looks from CLARENCE toward the vanished MARY, then back to CLARENCE)

FATHER Clarence, that young girl is crying—she's in tears What's the meaning of this?

CLARENCE I'm sorry, Father, it's all my fault

FATHER Nonsense! What's that girl trying to do to you?

CLARENCE What? No, she wasn't—it was—I—how long have you been here?

FATHER Well, whatever the quarrel was about, Clarence, I'm glad you held your own Where's your mother?

CLARENCE (*desperately*) I have to have a new suit of clothes—you've got to give me the money for it (*FATHER'S account book reaches the table with a sharp bang as he stares at CLARENCE in astonishment*)

FATHER Young man, do you realize you're addressing your father? (*CLARENCE writhes miserably and sinks into a chair*)

CLARENCE I'm sorry, Father—I apologize—but you don't know how important this is to me (*CLARENCE'S tone of misery gives FATHER pause*)

FATHER A suit of clothes is so—? Now, why should a—? (*Something dawns on FATHER and he looks up in the direction in which MARY has disappeared, then looks back at CLARENCE*) Has your need for a suit of clothes anything to do with that young lady?

CLARENCE Yes, Father.

FATHER Why, Clarence! (*Suddenly realizes that women have come into CLARENCE'S emotional life and there comes a yearning to protect this inexperienced and defenseless member of his own sex*) This comes as quite a shock to me

CLARENCE What does, Father?

FATHER Your being so grown up! Still, I might have known that if you're going to college this fall—yes, you're at an age when you'll be meeting girls Clarence, there are things about women that I think you ought to know! (*He goes up and closes the doors, then comes down and sits beside CLARENCE, hesitating for a moment before he speaks*) Yes, I think it's better for you to hear this from me than to have to learn it for your self Clarence, women aren't the angels that you think they are! Well, now—first, let me explain this to you You see, Clarence, we men have to run this world and it's not an easy job It takes work, and it takes thinking A man has to be sure of his facts and figures He has to reason things out Now, you take a woman—a woman thinks—no I'm wrong right there—a woman doesn't think at all! She gets stirred up! And she gets stirred up over the damndest things! Now, I love my wife just as much as any man, but that doesn't mean I should stand for a lot of folderol! By God! I won't stand for it! (*Looks around toward the spot where he had his last clash with VINNIE*)

CLARENCE Stand for what, Father?

FATHER (*to himself*) That's the one thing I will not submit myself to.

(*Has ceased explaining women to CLARENCE and is now explaining himself*) Clarence, if a man thinks a certain thing is the wrong thing to do he shouldn't do it. If he thinks a thing is right he should do it. Now that has nothing to do with whether he loves his wife or not.

CLARENCE Who says it has, Father?

FATHER They do!

CLARENCE Who, sir?

FATHER Women! They get stirred up and then they try to get you stirred up, too. If you can keep reason and logic in the argument, a man can hold his own, of course. But if they can switch you—pretty soon the argument's about whether you love them or not. I swear I don't know how they do it! Don't you let 'em, Clarence! Don't you let 'em!

CLARENCE I see what you mean so far, Father. If you don't watch yourself, love can make you do a lot of things you don't want to do.

FATHER Exactly!

CLARENCE But if you do watch out and know just how to handle women—

FATHER Then you'll be all right. All a man has to do is be firm. You know how sometimes I have to be firm with your mother. Just now about this month's household accounts—

CLARENCE Yes, but what can you do when they cry?

FATHER (*he gives this a moment's thought*) Well, that's quite a ques-

tion. You just have to make them understand that what you're doing is for their good.

CLARENCE I see.

FATHER (*rising*) Now, Clarence, you know all about women (*Goes to the table and sits down in front of his account book, opening it*). CLARENCE rises and looks at him.)

CLARENCE But, Father—

FATHER Yes, Clarence.

CLARENCE I thought you were going to tell me about—

FATHER About what?

CLARENCE About women (*FATHER realizes with some shock that CLARENCE expected him to be more specific*).

FATHER Clarence, there are some things gentlemen don't discuss! I've told you all you need to know. The thing for you to remember is—be firm! (*CLARENCE turns away. There is a knock at the sliding doors*). Yes, come in.

(*MARY opens the doors*.)

MARY Excuse me! (*MARY enters. FATHER turns his attention to the household accounts. MARY goes to the couch and picks up her handkerchief and continues around the couch. CLARENCE crosses to meet her above the couch, determined to be firm. MARY passes him without a glance. CLARENCE wilts, then again assuming firmness, turns up into the arch in an attempt to quail MARY with a look. MARY marches upstairs ignoring him. CLARENCE turns back into the room defeated. He looks*

down at his clothes unhappily, then decides to be firm with his father. He straightens up and steps toward him. At this moment FATHER, staring at a bill, emits his cry of rage.)

FATHER Oh, God! (CLARENCE retreats. FATHER rises and holds the bill in question between thumb and forefinger as though it were too repulsive to touch. VINNIE comes rushing down the stairs.)

VINNIE What's the matter, Clare? What's wrong?

FATHER I will not send this person a check!
(VINNIE looks at it.)

VINNIE Why, Clare, that's the only hat I've bought since March and it was reduced from forty dollars.

FATHER I don't question your buying the hat or what you paid for it, but the person from whom you bought it—this Mademoiselle Mimi—isn't fit to be in the hat business or any other.

VINNIE I never went there before, but it's a very nice place and I don't see why you object to it.

FATHER (exasperated) I object to it because this confounded person doesn't put her name on her bills! Mimi what? Mimi O'Brien? Mimi Jones? Mimi Weinstein?

VINNIE How do I know? It's just Mimi.

FATHER It isn't just Mimi. She must have some other name, damn it! Now, I wouldn't make out a check payable to Charley or to Jimmy, and

I won't make out a check payable to Mimi. Find out what her last name is, and I'll pay her the money.

VINNIE All right. All right. (She starts out.)

FATHER Just a minute, Vinnie, that isn't all.

VINNIE But Cora will be leaving any minute, Clare, and it isn't polite for me—

FATHER Never mind Cora. Sit down. (CLARENCE goes into the hall, looks upstairs, wanders up and down the hall restlessly. VINNIE reluctantly sits down opposite FATHER at the table.) Vinnie, you know I like to live well, and I want my family to live well. But this house must be run on a business basis. I must know how much money I'm spending and what for. For instance, if you recall, two weeks ago I gave you six dollars to buy a new coffee-pot—

VINNIE Yes, because you broke the old one. You threw it right on the floor.

FATHER I'm not talking about that. I'm simply endeavoring—

VINNIE But it was so silly to break that nice coffee-pot, Clare, and there was nothing the matter with the coffee that morning. It was made just the same as always.

FATHER It was not! It was made in a damned barbaric manner!

VINNIE I couldn't get another imported one. That little shop has stopped selling them. They said the tariff wouldn't let them. And that's

your fault, Clare, because you're always voting to raise the tariff

FATHER The tariff protects America against cheap foreign labor (*He sounds as though he is quoting*) Now I find that—

VINNIE The tariff does nothing but put up the prices and that's hard on everybody, especially the farmer (*She sounds as though she is quoting back*)

FATHER (*annoyed*) I wish to God you wouldn't talk about matters you don't know a damn thing about!

VINNIE I do too know about them Miss Gulick says every intelligent woman should have some opinion—

FATHER Who, may I ask, is Miss Gulick?

VINNIE Why, she's that current-events woman I told you about and the tickets are a dollar every Tuesday

FATHER Do you mean to tell me that a pack of idle-minded females pay a dollar apiece to hear another female gabble about the events of the day? Listen to me if you want to know anything about the events of the day!

VINNIE But you get so excited, Clare, and besides, Miss Gulick says that our President, whom you're always belittling, prays to God for guidance and—

FATHER (*having had enough of Miss Gulick*) Vinnie, what happened to that six dollars?

VINNIE What six dollars?

FATHER I gave you six dollars to buy a new coffeepot and now I find that you apparently got one at Lewis & Conger's and charged it Here's their bill "One coffeepot—five dollars"

VINNIE So you owe me a dollar and you can hand it right over (*She holds out her hand for it*)

FATHER I'll do nothing of the kind! What did you do with that six dollars?

VINNIE Why, Clare, I can't tell you now, dear Why didn't you ask me at the time?

FATHER Oh, my God!

VINNIE Wait a moment! I spent four dollars and a half for that new umbrella I told you I wanted and you said I didn't need, but I did, very much (*FATHER takes his pencil and writes in the account book*)

FATHER Now we're getting some where One umbrella—four dollars and a half

VINNIE And that must have been the week I paid Mrs Tobin for two extra days' washing

FATHER (*entering the item*) Mrs Tobin

VINNIE So that was two dollars more

FATHER Two dollars

VINNIE That makes six dollars and fifty cents And that's another fifty cents you owe me

FATHER I don't owe you anything (*Stung by VINNIE's tactics into a de-*

termination to pin her butterfly mind down) What you owe me is an explanation of where my money's gone! We're going over this account book item by item *(Starts to sort the bills for the purposes of cross-examination, but the butterfly takes wing again)*

VINNIE I do the very best I can to keep down expenses And you know yourself that Cousin Phoebe spends twice as much as we do

FATHER Damn Cousin Phoebe!—I don't wish to be told how she throws her money around

VINNIE Oh, Clare, how can you? And I thought you were so fond of Cousin Phoebe

FATHER All right, I am fond of Cousin Phoebe, but I can get along without hearing so much about her

VINNIE You talk about your own relatives enough

FATHER *(hurt)* That's not fair, Vinnie When I talk about my relatives I criticize them

VINNIE If I can't even speak of Cousin Phoebe—

FATHER You can speak of her all you want to—but I won't have Cousin Phoebe or anyone else dictating to me how to run my house Now this month's total—

VINNIE *(righteously)* I didn't say a word about her dictating, Clare—she isn't that kind!

FATHER *(dazed)* I don't know what you said, now You never stick to the point I endeavor to show you how to

run this house on a business basis and you wind up by jabbering and jabbering about everything under the sun If you'll just explain to me—*(Finally cornered, Vinnie realizes the time has come for tears Quietly she turns them on)*

VINNIE I don't know what you expect of me I tire myself out chasing up and down those stairs all day long—trying to look after your comfort—to bring up our children—I do the mending and the marketing and as if that isn't enough, you want me to be an expert bookkeeper, too

FATHER *(touched where Vinnie has hoped to touch him)* Vinnie, I want to be reasonable, but can't you understand?—I'm doing all this for your own good *(Vinnie rises with a moan FATHER sighs with resignation)* I suppose I'll have to go ahead just paying the bills and hoping I've got money enough in the bank to meet them But it's all very discouraging

VINNIE I'll try to do better, Clare *(FATHER looks up into her tearful face and melts)*

FATHER That's all I'm asking *(She goes to him and puts her arm around his shoulder)* I'll go down and make out the checks and sign them *(Vinnie doesn't seem entirely consoled, so he attempts a lighter note to cheer her up)* Oh, Vinnie, maybe I haven't any right to sign those checks, since in the sight of the Lord I haven't any name at all Do you suppose the bank will feel that way about it too—or do you think they'll take a chance? *(He should not have said this)*

VINNIE That's right! Clare, to make those checks good you'll have to be baptized right away

FATHER (*retreating angrily*) Vinnie, the bank doesn't care whether I've been baptized or not!

VINNIE Well, I care! And no matter what Dr. Lloyd says, I'm not sure we're really married

FATHER Damn it, Vinnie, we have four children! If we're not married now we never will be!

VINNIE Oh, Clare, don't you see how serious this is? You've got to do something about it

FATHER Well, just now I've got to do something about these damn bills you've run up (*Sternly*) I'm going downstairs

VINNIE Not before you give me that dollar and a half!

FATHER What dollar and a half?

VINNIE The dollar and a half you owe me!

FATHER (*thoroughly enraged*) I don't owe you any dollar and a half! I gave you money to buy a coffeepot for me and somehow it turned into an umbrella for you

VINNIE Clarence Day, what kind of a man are you? Quibbling about a dollar and a half when your immortal soul is in danger! And what's more—

FATHER All right All right All right (*He takes the dollar and a half from his change purse and gives it to her*)

VINNIE (*smiling*) Thank you, Clare
(*VINNIE turns and leaves the room*)

Her progress upstairs is a one-woman march of triumph FATHER puts his purse back, gathers up his papers and his dignity, and starts out CLARENCE waylays him in the arch)

CLARENCE Father—you never did tell me—can I have a new suit of clothes?

FATHER No, Clarence! I'm sorry, but I have to be firm with you, too! (*He stalks off* JOHN comes down the stairs carrying a traveling bag, which he takes out toward the front door. He returns empty-handed and starts up the stairs again)

CLARENCE John, come here a minute

JOHN (*coming into the room*) What do you want?

CLARENCE John, have you got any money you could lend me?

JOHN With this week's allowance I'll have about three dollars

CLARENCE That's no good I've got to have enough to buy a new suit of clothes

JOHN Why don't you earn some money? That's what I'm going to do I'm going to buy a bicycle—one of those new low kind, with both wheels the same size—you know, a safety

CLARENCE How are you going to earn that much money?

JOHN I've got a job practically Look, I found this ad in the paper (*He hands CLARENCE a clipping from his pocket*)

CLARENCE (*reading*) "Wanted, an energetic young man to handle household necessity that sells on sight Liberal commissions Apply 312 West Fourteenth Street, Tuesday from eight to twelve" Listen, John, let me have that job

JOHN Why should I give you my job? They're hard to get

CLARENCE But I've got to have a new suit of clothes

JOHN Maybe I could get a job for both of us (*The doorbell rings*) I'll tell you what I'll do, I'll ask the man

FATHER (*hurrying to the foot of the stairs*) Vinnie! Cora! The cab's here Hurry up! (*Goes through the arch toward the front door*)

CLARENCE John, we've both got to get down there early Tuesday—the first thing

JOHN Oh, no you don't—I'm going alone But I'll put in a good word with the boss about you

FATHER (*off*) They'll be right out Vinnie! Cora! (*He comes back to the foot of the stairs and calls up*) Are you coming? The cab's waiting!

VINNIE (*from upstairs*) We heard you, Clare We'll be down in a minute
(*FATHER comes into the room*)

FATHER John, go upstairs and hurry them down (*JOHN goes upstairs*
FATHER crosses to the window and looks out, then consults his watch)

FATHER What's the matter with those women? Don't they know cabs

cost money? Clarence, go see what's causing this infernal delay!
(*CLARENCE goes out to the hall*)

CLARENCE Here they come, Father (*MARY comes sedately downstairs*
She passes CLARENCE without a glance and goes to FATHER)

MARY Goodbye, Mr Day I can't tell you how much I appreciate your hospitality

FATHER Not at all! Not at all!
(*VINNIE and CORA appear at top of stairs and come down* JOHN follows with the bags and takes them out)

CORA Goodbye, Clarence (*She starts into the room*)

FATHER Cora, we can say goodbye to you on the sidewalk

VINNIE There's no hurry Their train doesn't go until one-thirty

FATHER Cal's cost money If they have any waiting to do they ought to do it at the Grand Central Depot They've got a waiting room there just for that

VINNIE (*to MARY*) If there's one thing Mr Day can't stand it's to keep a cab waiting

CORA It's been so nice seeing you again, Clarence (*She kisses him*
MARGARET enters with a box of lunch)

MARGARET Here's the lunch

FATHER All right All right Give it to me Let's get started (*MARGARET gives it to him and exits*)

1022 HOWARD LINDSAY AND RUSSEL CROUSE

CORA Where's John?

FATHER He's outside Come on
(Leads the way CORA and VINNIE
follow MARY starts)

CLARENCE Mary, aren't you going
even to shake hands with me?

MARY I don't think I'd better You
may remember that when I get too
close to you you feel contaminated
(Starts out CLARENCE follows her)

CLARENCE Mary! (She stops in the
arch He goes to her) You're going
to write me, aren't you?

MARY Are you going to write first?

CLARENCE (resolutely) No, Mary.
There are times when a man has to
be firm
(JOHN enters)

JOHN Mary, Mother says you'd bet-
ter hurry out before Father starts
yelling It's Sunday

MARY Goodbye, John I'm very hap-
py to have made your acquaintance
(She walks out We hear the door
close JOHN goes out CLARENCE takes
a step toward the door, stops, suffers
a moment, then turns to the writing
desk, takes paper and pen and ink to
the table, and sits down to write a
letter)

CLARENCE (writing) Dear Mary—

CURTAIN

SCENE II

The same

Two days later The breakfast table

HARLAN and WHITNEY are at the table, ready to start breakfast CLARENCE
is near the window reading the paper The places of JOHN and VINNIE and
FATHER are empty NORA, a new maid, is serving the fruit and cereal NORA
is heavily built and along toward middle age The doorbell rings and we hear
the postman's whistle CLARENCE drops the paper and looks out the window
toward the door NORA starts toward the arch

CLARENCE Never mind, Nora It's
the postman I'll go (He runs out
through the arch)

WHITNEY (to NORA) You forgot the
sugar It goes here between me and
Father

(CLARENCE comes back with three
or four letters which he sorts eagerly

Then his face falls in utter dejection
FATHER comes down the stairs)

FATHER Good morning, boys! John
late? (He shouts) John! John! Hur-
ry down to your breakfast

CLARENCE John had his breakfast
early, Father, and went out to see
about something

FATHER See about what?

CLARENCE John and I thought we'd work this summer and earn some money

FATHER Good! Sit down boys (*Goes to his chair*)

CLARENCE We saw an ad in the paper and John went down to see about it

FATHER Why didn't you go, too?

CLARENCE I was expecting an answer to a letter I wrote, but it didn't come Here's the mail (*He seems depressed*)

FATHER (*sitting*) What kind of work is this you're planning to do?

CLARENCE Sort of salesman, the ad said

FATHER Um-hum Well, work never hurt anybody It's good for them But if you're going to work, work hard King Solomon had the right idea about work "Whatever thy hand findeth to do," Solomon said, "do thy damndest!" Where's your mother?

NORA If you please, sir, Mrs Day doesn't want any breakfast She isn't feeling well, so she went back upstairs to lie down again

FATHER (*uneasily*) Now, why does your mother do that to me? She knows it just upsets my day when she doesn't come down to breakfast Clarence, go tell your mother I'll be up to see her before we start for the office

CLARENCE Yes, sir (*He goes upstairs.*)

HARLAN What's the matter with Mother?

FATHER There's nothing the matter with your mother Perfectly healthy woman She gets an ache or a twinge and instead of being firm about it, she just gives in to it (*The postman whistles Then the doorbell rings, NORA answers it*) Boys, after breakfast you find out what your mother wants you to do today Whitney, you take care of Harlan (*NORA comes back with a special delivery letter*)

NORA It's a special delivery (*She hands it to FATHER, who tears it open at once CLARENCE comes rushing down the stairs*)

CLARENCE Was that the postman again?

WHITNEY It was a special delivery

CLARENCE Yes? Where is it?

WHITNEY It was for Father

CLARENCE (*again disappointed*) Oh — (*He sits at the table FATHER has opened the letter and is reading it Bewildered, he turns it over and looks at the signature*)

FATHER I don't understand this at all Here's a letter from some woman I never even heard of (*FATHER tackles the letter again CLARENCE sees the envelope, picks it up, looks at the postmark, worried*)

CLARENCE Father!

FATHER Oh, God!

CLARENCE What is it, Father?

FATHER This is the damndest nonsense I ever read! As far as I can make out this woman claims that she sat on my lap and I didn't like it (CLARENCE begins to turn red FATHER goes on reading a little further and then holds the letter over in front of CLARENCE) Can you make out what that word is? (CLARENCE begins feverishly to read as much as possible, but FATHER cuts in) No, that word right there (He points)

CLARENCE It looks like—"curiosity" (FATHER withdraws the letter, CLARENCE's eyes following it hungrily)

FATHER (reads) "I only opened your letter as a matter of curiosity" (Breaks off reading aloud as he turns the page)

CLARENCE Yes? Go on

FATHER Why, this gets worse and worse! It just turns into a lot of sentimental lovey-dovey mush (Crushes the letter, stalks across the room, and throws it into the fireplace, CLARENCE watching him with dismay) Is this someone's idea of a practical joke? Why must I be the butt— (VINNIE comes hurrying down the stairs Her hair is down in two braids over her shoulder She is wearing a lacy combing jacket over her corset cover, and a striped petticoat)

VINNIE What's the matter, Clare? What's wrong?

FATHER (going to her) Nothing wrong—just a damn fool letter How are you Vinnie?

VINNIE (weakly) I don't feel well! I thought you needed me, but if you don't I'll go back to bed

FATHER No, now that you're here, sit down with us (He moves out her chair) Get some food in your stomach Do you good

VINNIE (protesting) I don't feel like eating anything, Clare (NORA enters with a tray of bacon and eggs, stops at the serving table)

FATHER (heartily) That's all the more reason why you should eat Build up your strength! (He forces VINNIE into her chair and turns to speak to NORA, who has her back to him) Here— (Then to CLARENCE) What's this one's name?

CLARENCE Nora

FATHER Nora! Give Mrs Day some of the bacon and eggs

VINNIE No, Clare! (NORA, however, has gone to VINNIE's side with the platter) No, take it away, Nora I don't even want to smell it (The maid retreats, and serves FATHER, then CLARENCE, then serves coffee and exits)

FATHER Vinnie, it's just weak to give in to an ailment Any disease can be cured by firmness What you need is strength of character

VINNIE I don't know why you object to my complaining a little I notice when you have a headache you yell and groan and swear enough

FATHER Of course I yell! That's to prove to the headache that I'm stronger than it is I can usually swear it right out of my system

VINNIE This isn't a headache I think I've caught some kind of a germ There's a lot of sickness

around Several of my friends have had to send for the doctor I may have the same thing

FATHER I'll bet this is all your imagination, Vinnie You hear of a lot of other people having some disease and then you get scared and think you have it yourself So you go to bed and send for the doctor The doctor—all poppycock!

VINNIE I didn't say anything about my sending for the doctor

FATHER I should hope not Doctors think they know a damn lot, but they don't

VINNIE But Clare, dear, when people are seriously ill you have to do something

FATHER Certainly you have to do something! Cheer 'em up—that's the way to cure 'em!

VINNIE (with slight irony) How would you go about cheering them up?

FATHER I? I'd tell 'em—bah! (VINNIE, out of exasperation and weakness begins to cry FATHER looks at her amazed) What have I done now?

VINNIE Oh, Clare—hush up! (She moves from the table to the sofa, where she tries to control her crying HARLAN slides out of his chair and runs over to her) Harlan dear, keep away from Mother You might catch what she's got Whitney, if you've finished your breakfast—

WHITNEY (rising) Yes, Mother

VINNIE I promised Mrs Whitehead to send over Margaret's recipe for

floating-island pudding Margaret has it all written out And take Harlan with you

WHITNEY All right, Mother I hope you feel better (WHITNEY and HARLAN exit FATHER goes over and sits beside VINNIE on the sofa)

FATHER Vinnie (Contritely) I didn't mean to upset you I was just trying to help (He pats her hand) When you take to your bed I have a damned lonely time around here So when I see you getting it into your head that you're sick I want to do something about it (He continues to pat her hand vigorously with what he thinks is reassurance) Just because some of your friends have given in to this is no reason why you should imagine you're sick, Vinnie

VINNIE (snatching her hand away) Oh, stop, Clare!—get out of this house and go to your office! (FATHER is a little bewildered and somewhat indignant at this rebuff to his tenderness He gets up and goes out into the hall, comes back with his hat and stick, and marches out of the house, slamming the door VINNIE rises and starts toward the stairs)

CLARENCE I'm sorry you're not feeling well, Mother

VINNIE Oh, I'll be all right, Clarence Remember last fall had a touch of this and I was all right the next morning

CLARENCE Are you sure you don't want the doctor?

VINNIE Oh, no I really don't need him—and besides doctors worry your father I don't want him to be upset.

CLARENCE Is there anything I can do for you?

VINNIE Ask Margaret to send me up a cup of tea I'll try to drink it I'm going back to bed

CLARENCE Do you mind if John and I go out today or will you need us?

VINNIE You run right along I just want to be left alone *(She exits up the stairs CLARENCE starts for the fireplace eager to retrieve MARY's letter NORA enters He stops)*

CLARENCE Oh!—Nora—will you take a cup of tea up to Mrs Day in her room?

NORA Yes, sir *(Exits CLARENCE hurries around the table, gets the crumpled letter, and starts to read it feverishly He reads quickly to the end, then draws a deep, happy breath The door slams He puts the letter in his pocket JOHN enters, carrying two heavy packages)*

CLARENCE Did you get the job?

JOHN Yes, for both of us Look, I've got it with me

CLARENCE What is it?

JOHN Medicine

CLARENCE *(dismayed)* Medicine! You took a job for us to go out and sell medicine!

JOHN But it's wonderful medicine *(Gets a bottle out of the package and reads from the label)* "Bartlett's Beneficent Balm—A Boon to Mankind" Look what it cures! *(He hands the bottle to CLARENCE)*

CLARENCE *(reading)* "A sovereign cure for colds, coughs, catarrh, asthma, quins, and sore throat, poor digestion, summer complaint, colic, dyspepsia, heartburn, and shortness of breath, lumbago, rheumatism, heart disease, giddiness, and women's complaints, nervous prostration, St Vitus' dance, jaundice, and la grippe, proud flesh, pink eye, seasickness, and pimples" *(As CLARENCE has read off the list he has become more and more impressed)*

JOHN See?

CLARENCE Say, that sounds all right!

JOHN It's made "from a secret formula known only to Dr Bartlett"

CLARENCE He must be quite a doctor!

JOHN *(enthusiastically)* It sells for a dollar a bottle and we get twenty-five cents commission on every bottle

CLARENCE Well, where does he want us to sell it?

JOHN He's given us the territory of all Manhattan Island

CLARENCE That's bully! Anybody that's sick at all ought to need a bottle of this Let's start by calling on friends of Father and Mother

JOHN That's a good idea But wait a minute Suppose they ask us if we use it at our house?

CLARENCE *(a little worried)* Oh, yes It would be better if we could say we did

JOHN But we can't because we haven't had it here long enough.

(NORA enters with a tray with a cup of tea She goes to the table and puts the sugar bowl and cream pitcher on it)

CLARENCE Is that the tea for Mrs Day?

NORA Yes
(The suspicion of a good idea dawns on CLARENCE)

CLARENCE I'll take it up to her You needn't bother

NORA Thank you Take it up right away while it's hot (She exits CLARENCE watches her out)

CLARENCE (eyeing JOHN) Mother wasn't feeling well this morning

JOHN What was the matter with her?

CLARENCE I don't know—she was just complaining

JOHN (getting the idea immediately and consulting the bottle) Well, it says here it's good for women's complaints (They look at each other CLARENCE opens the bottle and smells its contents JOHN leans over and takes a sniff, too Then he nods to CLARENCE, who quickly reaches for a spoon and measures out a tea-spoonful, which he puts into the tea JOHN, wanting to be sure MOTHER has enough to cure her, pours still more into the tea from the bottle as the curtain falls The curtain remains down for a few seconds to denote a lapse of three hours When the curtain rises again, the breakfast things have been cleared and the room is in order HARLAN is kneeling on FATHER's chair looking out the window as if watching for someone.

MARGARET comes down from upstairs)

MARGARET Has your father come yet?

HARLAN Not yet
(NORA enters from downstairs with a steaming teakettle and a towel and meets MARGARET in the hall)

MARGARET Hurry that upstairs The doctor's waiting for it I've got to go out

NORA Where are you going?

MARGARET I have to go and get the minister
(NORA goes upstairs)

HARLAN There's a cab coming up the street

MARGARET Well, I hope it's him, poor man—but a cab doesn't sound like your father (She hurries downstairs HARLAN sees something through the window, then rushes to the stairwell and shouts down to MARGARET)

HARLAN Yes, it's Father Whitney got him all right (Runs back to the window The front door slams and FATHER crosses the arch and hurries upstairs WHITNEY comes into the room) What took you so long?

WHITNEY Long? I wasn't long I went right down on the elevator and got Father right away and we came all the way back in a cab

HARLAN I thought you were never coming

WHITNEY Well, the horse didn't go very fast at first The cabby whipped

him and swore at him and still he wouldn't gallop. Then Father spoke to the horse personally—How is Mother?

HARLAN I don't know. The doctor's up there now.

WHITNEY Well, she'd better be good and sick or Father may be mad at me for getting him up here—'specially in a cab.

(FATHER comes down the stairs muttering to himself.)

FATHER (*indignantly*) Well, huh!—It seems to me I ought to be shown a little consideration. I guess I've got some feelings, too!

WHITNEY (*hopefully*) Mother's awfully sick, isn't she?

FATHER How do I know? I wasn't allowed to stay in the same room with her.

WHITNEY Did the doctor put you out?

FATHER No, it was your mother, damn it! (*He goes out and hangs up his hat and stick, then returns. FATHER may be annoyed, but he is also worried.*) You boys keep quiet around here today.

WHITNEY She must be pretty sick.

FATHER She must be, Whitney! I don't know! Nobody ever tells me anything in this house. Not a damn thing!

(DR HUMPHREYS comes down the stairs. He's the family-doctor type of the period, with just enough whiskers to make him impressive. He carries his satchel.)

DR HUMPHREYS Mrs. Day is quieter now.

FATHER How sick is she? What's the matter with her?

DR HUMPHREYS She's a pretty sick woman, Mr. Day. I had given her a sedative just before you came—and after you left the room I had to give her another. Have you a telephone?

FATHER A telephone! No—I don't believe in them. Why?

DR HUMPHREYS Well, it would only have saved me a few steps. I'll be back in ten minutes. (*He turns to go.*)

FATHER Wait a minute—I think I'm entitled to know what's the matter with my wife.

(DR HUMPHREYS turns back.)

DR HUMPHREYS What did Mrs. Day have for breakfast this morning?

FATHER She didn't eat anything—not a thing.

DR HUMPHREYS Are you sure?

FATHER I tried to get her to eat something, but she wouldn't.

DR HUMPHREYS (*almost to himself*). I can't understand it.

FATHER Understand what?

DR HUMPHREYS These violent attacks of nausea. It's almost as though she were poisoned.

FATHER Poisoned!

DR HUMPHREYS I'll try not to be gone more than ten or fifteen minutes. (*He exits.*)

FATHER (*trying to reassure himself*) Damn doctors! They never know what's the matter with anybody. Well, he'd better get your mother well, and damn soon or he'll hear from me.

WHITNEY Mother's going to get well, isn't she? (FATHER looks at WHITNEY sharply as though he is a little angry at anyone even raising the question)

FATHER Of course she's going to get well!

HARLAN (*running to FATHER*) I hope she gets well soon. When Mamma stays in bed it's lonesome.

FATHER Yes, it is, Harlan. It's lonesome. (*He looks around the room and finds it pretty empty*) What were you boys supposed to do today?

WHITNEY I was to learn the rest of my catechism.

FATHER Well, if that's what your mother wanted you to do, you'd better do it.

WHITNEY I know it—I think.

FATHER You'd better be sure.

WHITNEY I can't be sure unless somebody hears me. Will you hear me?

FATHER (*with sudden willingness to be useful*) All right. I'll hear you, Whitney. (WHITNEY goes to the mantel and gets VINNIE's prayer book. FATHER sits on the sofa. HARLAN climbs up beside him.)

HARLAN If Mamma's still sick will you read to me tonight?

FATHER Of course I'll read to you. (WHITNEY opens the prayer book and hands it to FATHER.)

WHITNEY Here it is, Father. Just the end of it. Mother knows I know the rest. Look, start here. (*He points*.)

FATHER All right. (*Reading*) "How many parts are there in a Sacrament?"

WHITNEY (*reciting*) "Two, the outward visible sign, and the inward spiritual grace." (*FATHER nods in approval*.)

FATHER "What is the outward visible sign or form in Baptism?"

WHITNEY "Water, wherein the person is baptized, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." You haven't been baptized, Father, have you?

FATHER (*ignoring it*) "What is the inward and spiritual grace?"

WHITNEY If you don't have to be baptized, why do I have to be confirmed?

FATHER (*ignoring this even more*) "What is the inward and spiritual grace?"

WHITNEY "A death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness, for being by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath, we are hereby made the children of grace." Is that why you get mad so much, Father—because you're a child of wrath?

FATHER Whitney, mind your manners! You're not supposed to ask questions of your elders! "What is required of persons to be baptized?"

WHITNEY. "Repentance, whereby—whereby—" (He pauses)

appears in the arch from the right having come through the front door)

FATHER (quickly shutting the book and handing it to WHITNEY) You don't know it well enough, Whitney You'd better study it some more

MARGARET Sh—sh— (FATHER turns quickly and sees MARGARET)

FATHER Oh, there you are!

WHITNEY Now?

FATHER (softening) No, you don't have to do it now Let's see, now, what can we do?

MARGARET (reprovingly) We must all be quiet, Mr Day—Mrs Day is very sick

WHITNEY Well, I was working with my tool chest out in the back yard (Edges toward the arch)

FATHER (testily) I know she's sick That's what I wanted you for You go up and wait outside her door in case she needs anything (MARGARET starts upstairs) And what were you doing out of the house, anyway?

FATHER Better not do any hammering with your mother sick upstairs You'd better stay here

MARGARET I was sent for the minister

WHITNEY I wasn't hammering—I was doing wood-carving

FATHER (startled) The minister!

FATHER Well, Harlan—how about you? Shall we play some tiddle-dy-winks?

MARGARET Yes, he'll be right in He's paying off the cab (MARGARET continues upstairs The door slams THE REVEREND DR LLOYD appears in the archway and meets FATHER in the hall)

HARLAN (edging toward WHITNEY) I was helping Whitney

DR LLOYD I was deeply shocked to hear of Mrs Day's illness I hope I can be of some service Will you take me up to her?

FATHER Oh—all right (The boys go out FATHER goes to the stairwell) Boys, don't do any shouting We all have to be very quiet around here (He stands in the hall and looks up toward VINNIE, worried Then he tiptoes across the room and stares gloomily out of the window Then he tiptoes back into the hall and goes to the rail of the basement stairs, and calls quietly) Margaret! (There is no answer and he raises his voice a little) Margaret! (There is still no answer and he lets loose) Margaret! Why don't you answer when you hear me calling? (At this moment MARGARET, hat on,

FATHER (with a trace of hostility) She's resting now She can't be disturbed

DR LLOYD But I've been summoned

FATHER The doctor will be back in a few minutes and we'll see what he has to say about it You'd better come in and wait

DR LLOYD Thank you (Comes into the room FATHER follows him re-

luctantly) Mrs Day has been a tower of strength in the parish Everyone liked her so much Yes, she was a fine woman

FATHER I wish to God you wouldn't talk about Mrs Day as if she were dead

(NORA comes down the stairs and looks into the room)

NORA Is the doctor back yet?

FATHER No Does she need him?

NORA She's kinda' restless She's talking in her sleep and twisting and turning (She goes downstairs FATHER looks up toward VINNIE's room, worried, then looks angrily toward the front door)

FATHER That doctor said he'd be tight back (He goes to the window)

MARGARET (coming downstairs) Here comes the doctor I was watching for him out the window (She goes to the front door A moment later DR HUMPHREYS enters)

FATHER Well, doctor—seems to me that was a pretty long ten minutes

DR HUMPHREYS (*indignantly*) See here, Mr Day, if I'm to be responsible for Mrs Day's health, I must be allowed to handle this case in my own way

FATHER Well, you can't handle it if you're out of the house

DR HUMPHREYS (*flaring*) I left this house because—(DR SOMERS, an imposing medical figure, enters and stops at DR HUMPHREYS's side) This is Dr Somers

DR SOMERS How do you do?

DR HUMPHREYS I felt that Mrs. Day's condition warranted my getting Dr Somers here as soon as possible for consultation I hope that meets with your approval

FATHER (*a little awed*) Why, yes, of course Anything that can be done

DR HUMPHREYS Upstairs, doctor! (The two doctors go upstairs FATHER turns back into the room, obviously shaken)

DR LLOYD Mrs Day is in good hands now, Mr Day There's nothing you and I can do at the moment to help (After a moment's consideration FATHER decides there is something that can be done to help He goes to DR LLOYD FATHER indicates the seat in front of the table to DR LLOYD and they both sit)

FATHER Dr Lloyd, there's something that's troubling Mrs Day's mind I think you know what I refer to

DR LLOYD Yes—you mean the fact that you've never been baptized

FATHER I gathered you knew about it from your sermon last Sunday (Looks at him a second with indignant memory) But let's not get angry I think something had better be done about it

DR LLOYD Yes, Mr Day

FATHER When the doctors get through up there I want you to talk to Mrs Day I want you to tell her something

DR LLOYD (*eagerly*) Yes, I'll be glad to

FATHER You're just the man to do it! She shouldn't be upset about this—I want you to tell her that my being baptized would just be a lot of damn nonsense

(*This isn't what DR LLOYD has expected and it is hardly his idea of how to help MRS DAY*)

DR LLOYD But, Mr Day!

FATHER No, she'd take your word on a thing like that—and we've got to do everything we can to help her now

DR LLOYD (*rising*) But baptism is one of the sacraments of the Church—

FATHER (*rising*) You're her minister and you're supposed to bring her comfort and peace of mind

DR LLOYD But the solution is so simple. It would take only your consent to be baptized

FATHER That's out of the question! And I'm surprised that a grown man like you should suggest such a thing

DR LLOYD If you're really concerned about Mrs Day's peace of mind, don't you think—

FATHER Now see here—if you're just going to keep her stirred up about this, I'm not going to let you see her at all (*He turns away DR LLOYD follows him*)

DR LLOYD Now, Mr Day, as you said, we must do everything we can—(*The doctors come downstairs FATHER sees them*)

FATHER Well, doctor, how is she? What have you decided?

DR HUMPHREYS We've just left Mrs Day. Is there a room we could use for our consultation?

FATHER Of course (*MARGARET starts downstairs*) Margaret, you go back upstairs! I don't want Mrs Day left alone!

MARGARET I have to do something for the doctor. I'll go back up as soon as I get it started

FATHER Well, hurry. And, Margaret, show these gentlemen down stairs to the billiard room

MARGARET Yes, sir. This way, doctor—downstairs (*Exits, followed by DR SOMERS FATHER delays DR HUMPHREYS*)

FATHER Dr Humphreys, you know now, don't you—this isn't serious is it?

DR HUMPHREYS After we've had our consultation we'll talk to you, Mr Day

FATHER But surely you must—

DR HUMPHREYS Just rest assured that Dr Somers will do everything that is humanly possible

FATHER Why, you don't mean—

DR HUMPHREYS We'll try not to be long (*Exits FATHER turns and looks at DR LLOYD He is obviously frightened*)

FATHER This Dr Somers—I've heard his name often—he's very well thought of, isn't he?

DR LLOYD Oh, yes indeed.

FATHER If Vinnie's really—if any one could help her, he could—don't you think?

DR LLOYD A very fine physician But there's a greater Help, ever present in the hour of need Let us turn to Him in prayer Let us kneel and pray (FATHER looks at him, straightens, then walks to the other side of the room) Let us kneel and pray (FATHER finally bows his head DR LLOYD looks at him and, not kneeling himself, raises his head and speaks simply in prayer) Oh, Lord, look down from Heaven—behold, visit, and relieve this Thy servant who is grieved with sickness, and extend to her Thy accustomed goodness We know she has sinned against Thee in thought, word, and deed Have mercy on her, O Lord, have mercy on this miserable sinner
FATHER—

FATHER She's not a miserable sinner and you know it! (Then FATHER speaks directly to the Deity) O God! You know Vinnie's not a miserable sinner She's a damn fine woman! She shouldn't be made to suffer It's got to stop, I tell you, it's got to stop! (VINNIE appears on the stairway in her nightgown)

VINNIE What's the matter, Clare? What's wrong?

FATHER (not hearing her) Have mercy, I say, have mercy, damn it!

VINNIE What's the matter, Clare? What's wrong? (FATHER turns, sees VINNIE, and rushes to her)

FATHER Vinnie, what are you doing down here? You shouldn't be out of bed You get right back upstairs (He now has his arms around her)

VINNIE Oh, Clare, I heard you call Do you need me?

FATHER (deeply moved) Vinnie—I know now how much I need you Get well, Vinnie I'll be baptized I promise I'll be baptized

VINNIE You will? Oh, Clare!

FATHER I'll do anything We'll go to Europe, just we two—you won't have to worry about the children or the household accounts— (VINNIE faints against FATHER's shoulder) Vinnie! (He stoops to lift her)

DR LLOYD I'll get the doctor But don't worry, Mr Day—she'll be all right now (FATHER lifts VINNIE up in his arms) Bless you for what you've done, Mr Day

FATHER What did I do?

DR LLOYD You promised to be baptized!

FATHER (aghast) I did? (With horror FATHER realizes he has been betrayed—and by himself) OH, GOD!

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

SCENE I

The same

A month later Mid-afternoon

VINNIE is seated on the sofa embroidering petit point

MARGARET enters, as usual uncomfortable at being upstairs

MARGARET You wanted to speak to me, ma'am?

VINNIE He's never said he didn't like them, has he?

VINNIE Yes, Margaret, about tomorrow morning's breakfast — we must plan it very carefully

MARGARET They've never got a stamp on the floor out of him one way or the other

MARGARET (*puzzled*) Mr Day hasn't complained to me about his breakfasts lately. As a matter of fact, I've been blessing my luck!

VINNIE If Mr Day doesn't say he doesn't like a thing you can assume that he does. Let's take a chance on kippers, Margaret

VINNIE Oh, no, it's not that. But tomorrow morning I'd like something for his breakfast that would surprise him

MARGARET Very well, ma'am (*She starts out*)

MARGARET (*doubtfully*) Surprising Mr Day is always a bit of a risk, ma'am. My motto with him has always been "Let well enough alone."

VINNIE (*innocently*) And, Margaret, you'd better have enough breakfast for two extra places

VINNIE But if we think of something he especially likes, Margaret — what would you say to kippers?

MARGARET (*knowingly*) Oh — so that's it! We're going to have company again

MARGARET Well, I've served him kippers, but I don't recall his ever saying he liked them

VINNIE Yes, my cousin, Miss Cartwright, and her friend are coming back from Springfield. I'm afraid they'll get here just about breakfast time

MARGARET Well, in that case I'd better make some of my Sunday morning hot biscuits, too

VINNIE Yes We know Mr Day likes those

MARGARET I've been getting him to church with them for the last fifteen years (*The door slams MARGARET goes to the arch and looks*) Oh, it's Mr Clarence, ma'am (*Goes off downstairs and CLARENCE enters with a large package*)

CLARENCE Here it is, Mother (*He puts it on the table*)

VINNIE Oh, it was still in the store! They hadn't sold it! I'm so thrilled Didn't you admire it, Clarence? (*She hurries over to the table*)

CLARENCE Well, it's unusual

VINNIE (*unwrapping the package*) You know, I saw this down there the day before I got sick I was walking through the bric-a-brac section and it caught my eye I was so tempted to buy it! And all the time I lay ill I just couldn't get it out of my head I can't understand how it could stay in the store all this time without somebody snatching it up (*She takes it out of the box It is a large china pug dog*) Isn't that the darlindest thing you ever saw! It does need a ribbon, though I've got the very thing somewhere Oh, yes, I know (*Goes to the side table and gets a red ribbon out of the drawer*)

CLARENCE Isn't John home yet?

VINNIE I haven't seen him Why?

CLARENCE Well, you know we've been working, and John went down to collect our money

VINNIE That's fine (*She ties the ribbon around the dog's neck*) Oh, Clarence, I have a secret for just the two of us, who do you think is coming to visit us tomorrow?—Cousin Cora and Mary

CLARENCE Yes, I know

VINNIE How did you know?

CLARENCE I happened to get a letter (*JOHN enters, carrying two packages of medicine*)

VINNIE John, did you ever see anything so sweet?

JOHN What is it?

VINNIE It's a pug dog Your father would never let me have a real one, but he can't object to one made of china This ribbon needs pressing I'll take it down and have Margaret do it right away (*Exits with the be-ribboned pug dog*)

CLARENCE What did you bring home more medicine for? (*Then with sudden fright*) Dr Bartlett paid us off, didn't he?

JOHN Oh, yes!

CLARENCE (*heaving a great sigh of relief*) You had me scared for a minute When I went down to Mr Creery's to get that pug dog for Mother, I ordered the daisiest suit you ever saw Dr Bartlett owed us sixteen dollars apiece, and the suit was only fifteen Wasn't that lucky? Come on, give me my money

JOHN. Clarence, Dr Bartlett paid us off in medicine

CLARENCE You let him pay us off with that old Beneficent Balm!

JOHN Well, he thanked us, too, for our services to mankind

CLARENCE (*in agony*) But my suit!

JOHN You'll just have to wait for your suit

CLARENCE I can't wait! I've got to have it tomorrow—and besides they're making the alterations I've got to pay for it this afternoon! Fifteen dollars!

JOHN (*helpfully*) Why don't you offer them fifteen bottles of medicine? (CLARENCE *gives it a little desperate thought*)

CLARENCE They wouldn't take it McCreery's don't sell medicine (JOHN *is by the window and looks out*)

JOHN That's too bad Here comes Father

CLARENCE I'll have to brace him for that fifteen dollars I hate to do it, but I've got to—that's all—I've got to

JOHN I'm not going to be here when you do I'd better hide this somewhere, anyway (*Takes the packages and hurries upstairs The door slams FATHER enters and looks into the room*)

CLARENCE Good afternoon, sir

FATHER How's your mother, Clarence? Where is she?

CLARENCE She's all right She's downstairs with Margaret Oh, Father— (FATHER *goes off down the hall and we hear him calling downstairs*)

FATHER Vinnie! Vinnie! I'm home (*Comes back into the room, carrying his newspaper*)

CLARENCE Father, Mother will be well enough to go to church with us next Sunday

FATHER That's fine, Clarence That's fine

CLARENCE Father, have you noticed that I haven't been kneeling down in church lately?

FATHER Clarence, don't let your mother catch you at it

CLARENCE Then I've got to have a new suit of clothes right away!

FATHER (*after a puzzled look*) Clarence, you're not even making sense!

CLARENCE But a fellow doesn't feel right in cut-down clothes—especially your clothes That's why I can't kneel down in church—I can't do anything in them you wouldn't do

FATHER Well, that's a damn good thing! If my old clothes make you behave yourself I don't think you ought to wear anything else

CLARENCE (*desperately*) Oh, no! You're you and I'm me! I want to be myself! Besides, you're older and there are things I've got to do that I wouldn't do at your age

FATHER Clarence, you should never do anything I wouldn't do

CLARENCE Oh, yes,—look, for instance Suppose I should want to kneel down in front of a girl?

FATHER Why in Heaven's name should you want to do a thing like that?

CLARENCE Well, I've got to get married *sometime* I've got to propose to a girl *sometime*

FATHER (*exasperated*) Before you're married, you'll be earning your own clothes, I hope Don't get the idea into your head I'm going to support you and a wife, too Besides, at your age, Clarence—

CLARENCE (*hastily*) Oh, I'm not going to be married right away, but for fifteen dollars I can get a good suit of clothes

FATHER (*bewildered and irritated*) Clarence! (*He stares at him At this second, VINNIE comes through the arch*) Why, you're beginning to talk as crazy as your mother (*He sees her*) Oh, hello, Vinnie How're you feeling today?

VINNIE I'm fine, Clare (*They kiss*) You don't have to hurry home from the office every day like this (*CLARENCE throws himself in the chair by the window, sick with disappointment*)

FATHER Business the way it is, no use going to the office at all

VINNIE But you haven't been to your club for weeks

FATHER Can't stand the damn place You do look better, Vinnie What did you do today? (*Drops on the sofa VINNIE stands behind the sofa Her chatter does not succeed in diverting FATHER from his newspaper*)

VINNIE I took a long walk and dropped in to call on old Mrs Whitehead

FATHER Well, that's fine

VINNIE And, Clare, it was the most fortunate thing that ever happened I've got wonderful news for you! Who do you think was there? Mr Morley!

FATHER (*not placing him*) Morley?

VINNIE You remember—that nice young minister who substituted for Dr Lloyd one Sunday?

FATHER Oh, yes! Bright young fellow, preached a good sensible sermon

VINNIE It was the only time I ever saw you put five dollars in the plate!

FATHER Ought to be more ministers like him I could get along with that young man without any trouble at all

VINNIE Well, Clare, his parish is in Audubon—you know, 'way up above Harlem

FATHER Is that so?

VINNIE Isn't that wonderful? No body knows you up there You'll be perfectly safe!

FATHER Safe? Vinnie, what the devil are you talking about?

VINNIE I've been all over everything with Mr Morley and he's agreed to baptize you

FATHER Oh, he has—the young whippersnapper! Damn nice of him!

VINNIE We can go up there any morning, Clare—we don't even have to make an appointment

FATHER Vinnie, you're just making a lot of plans for nothing Who said I was going to be baptized at all?

VINNIE (*aghast*) Why, Clare! You did!

FATHER Now, Vinnie!—

VINNIE You gave me your promise—your Sacred Promise You stood right on that spot and said "I'll be baptized I promise—I'll be baptized"

FATHER What if I did?

VINNIE (*amazed, she comes down and faces him*) Aren't you a man of your word?

FATHER (*rising*) Vinnie, that was under entirely different circumstances We all thought you were dying, so naturally I said that to make you feel better As a matter of fact, the doctor told me that's what cured you So it seems to me pretty ungrateful of you to press this matter any further

VINNIE Clarence Day, you gave me your Sacred Promise!

FATHER (*getting annoyed*) Vinnie, you were sick when I said that Now you're well again
(*MARGARET enters with the pug dog, which now has the freshly pressed ribbon tied around its neck She puts it on the table*)

MARGARET Is that all right, Mrs Day?

VINNIE (*dismissingly*) That's fine, Margaret, thank you (*MARGARET*

exits) My being well has nothing to do with it You gave me your word! You gave the Lord your word If you had seen how eager Mr Morley was to bring you into the fold! (*FATHER, trying to escape, has been moving toward the arch when suddenly the pug dog catches his eye and he stares at it fascinated*) And you're going to march yourself up to his church some morning before you go to the office and be christened If you think for one minute that I'm going to—

FATHER What in the name of Heaven is that?

VINNIE If you think I'm going to let you add the sin of breaking your Solemn and Sacred Promise—

FATHER I demand to know what that repulsive object is!

VINNIE (*exasperated in her turn*) It's perfectly plain what it is—it's a pug dog!

FATHER What's it doing in this house?

VINNIE (*defiantly*) I wanted it and I bought it

FATHER You spent good money for that?

VINNIE Clare, we're not talking about that! We're talking about you Don't try to change the subject!

FATHER How much did you pay for that atrocity?

VINNIE I don't know I sent Clarence down for it Listen to me, Clare—

FATHER Clarence, what did you pay for that?

CLARENCE I didn't pay anything. I charged it

FATHER (*looking at VINNIE*) Charged it! I might have known (*To CLARENCE*) How much was it?

CLARENCE Fifteen dollars

FATHER Fifteen dollars for that eyesore?

VINNIE (*to the rescue of the pug dog*) Don't you call that lovely work of art an eyesore! That will look beautiful sitting on a red cushion by the fireplace in the parlor

FATHER If that sits in the parlor, I won't! Furthermore, I don't even want it in the same house with me. Get it out of here! (*He starts for the stairs*)

VINNIE You're just using that for an excuse. You're not going to get out of this room until you set a date for your baptism (*FATHER turns at the foot of the stairs*)

FATHER I'll tell you one thing! I'll never be baptized while that hideous monstrosity is in this house (*He stalks upstairs*)

VINNIE (*calling after him*) All right! (*She goes to the pug dog*) All right! It goes back this afternoon and he's christened first thing in the morning

CLARENCE But, Mother—

VINNIE Clarence, you heard him say that he'd be baptized as soon as I got this pug dog out of the house. You hurry right back to McCreery's with it—and be sure they credit us with fifteen dollars (*The fifteen dollars rings a bell in CLARENCE'S mind*)

CLARENCE Oh, say, Mother, while I was at McCreery's, I happened to see a suit I would like very much and the suit was only fifteen dollars

VINNIE (*regretfully*). Well, Clarence, I think your suit will have to wait until after I get your father christened

CLARENCE (*hopefully*) No, I meant that since the suit cost just the same as the pug dog, if I exchanged the pug dog for the suit—

VINNIE Why, yes! Then your suit wouldn't cost Father anything! Why, how bright of you, Clarence, to think of that!

CLARENCE (*quickly*) I'd better start right away before McCreery's closes. (*They have collected the box, wrapper, and tissue paper*)

VINNIE Yes. Let's see. If we're going to take your father all the way up to Audubon— Clarence, you stop at Ryerson & Brown's on your way back and tell them to have a cab here at eight o'clock tomorrow morning

CLARENCE Mother, a cab! Do you think you ought to do that?

VINNIE Well, we can't walk to Audubon

CLARENCE (*warningly*) But you know what a cab does to Father!

VINNIE This is an important occasion

CLARENCE (*with a shrug*) All right! A brougham or a Victoria?

VINNIE Get one of their best cabs the kind they use at funerals

CLARENCE Those cost two dollars an hour! And if Father gets mad—

VINNIE Well, if your father starts to argue in the morning, you remember—

CLARENCE (*remembering his suit*) Oh, he agreed to it! We both heard him!

(*Vinnie has removed the ribbon and is about to put the pug dog back in the box*)

VINNIE (*regretfully*) I did have my heart set on this (*An idea comes to her*) Still—if they didn't sell him in all that time, he might be safe there for a few more weeks (*She gives the dog a reassuring pat and puts him in the box* She begins to sing "Sweet Marie" happily FATHER comes down the stairs CLARENCE takes his hat and the box and goes happily and quickly out FATHER watches him) I hope you notice that Clarence is returning the pug dog

FATHER That's a sign you're getting your faculties back (*Vinnie is singing quietly to herself in a satisfied way*) Good to hear you singing again, Vinnie (*Suddenly remembering something*) Oh!—on my way uptown I stopped in at Tiffany's and bought you a little something. Thought you might like it (*He takes out of his pocket a small ring-box and holds it out to her* She takes it)

VINNIE Oh, Clare (*She opens it eagerly*) What a beautiful ring! (*She takes the ring out, puts it on her finger, and admires it*)

FATHER Glad if it pleases you (*He settles down to his newspaper on the sofa*)

VINNIE I don't know how to thank you (*She kisses him*)

FATHER It's thanks enough for me to have you up and around again. When you're sick, Vinnie, this house is like a tomb. There's no excitement

VINNIE (*sitting beside him*) Clare, this is the loveliest ring you ever bought me. Now that I have this, you needn't buy me any more rings

FATHER Well, if you don't want any more

VINNIE What I'd really like now is a nice diamond necklace

FATHER (*alarmed*) Vinnie, do you know how much a diamond necklace costs?

VINNIE I know, Clare, but don't you see?—your giving me this ring shows that I mean a little something to you. Now, a diamond necklace—

FATHER Good God, if you don't know by this time how I feel about you! We've been married for twenty years and I've loved you every minute of it

VINNIE What did you say? (*Her eyes well with tears at FATHER's definite statement of his love*)

FATHER I said we'd been married twenty years and I've loved you every minute of it. But if I have to buy out jewelry stores to prove it—if I haven't shown it to you in my words and actions, I might as well— (*He turns and sees Vinnie dabbing her*

eyes and speaks with resignation)
What have I done now?

VINNIE It's all right, Clare—I'm just so happy

FATHER Flappy!

VINNIE You said you loved me! And this beautiful ring—that's something else I didn't expect. Oh, Clare, I love surprises. *(She nestles against him)*

FATHER That's another thing I can't understand about you, Vinnie. Now, I like to know what to expect. Then I'm prepared to meet it.

VINNIE *(putting her head on his shoulder)* Yes, I know. But, Clare, life would be pretty dull if we always knew what was coming.

FATHER Well, it's certainly not dull around here. In this house you never know what's going to hit you to-morrow.

VINNIE *(to herself)* Tomorrow! *(She starts to sing, FATHER listening to her happily)*

'Every daisy in the dell,
Knows my secret, knows it well,
And yet I dare not tell,
Sweet Marie!'

CURTAIN

SCENE II

The same

The next morning. Breakfast. All the family except JOHN and VINNIE are at the table and in good spirits.

JOHN *(entering)* Mother says she'll be right down. *(He sits at the table. MAGGIE, the new maid, enters with a plate of hot biscuits and serves FATHER. As FATHER takes a biscuit, he glances up at her and shows some little surprise.)*

FATHER Who are you? What's your name?

MAGGIE Margaret, sir.

FATHER Can't be Margaret. We've got one Margaret in the house.

MAGGIE At home they call me Maggie, sir.

FATHER *(genially)* All right, Maggie. *(MAGGIE continues serving the biscuits.)* Boys, if her name's Margaret, that's a good sign. Maybe she'll stay awhile. You know, boys, your mother used to be just the same about cooks as she is about maids. Never could keep them for some reason. Well, one day about fifteen years ago—yes, it was right after you were born, John—my, you were a homely baby. *(They all laugh at JOHN's expense.)* I came home that night all tired out and what did I find?—no dinner, because the cook had left. Well, I decided I'd had just about enough of that, so I just marched over to the employment agency on

Sixth Avenue and said to the woman in charge "Where do you keep the cooks?" She tried to hold me up with a lot of red-tape folderol, but I just walked into the room where the girls were waiting, looked 'em over, saw Margaret, pointed at her, and said "I'll take that one" I walked her home, she cooked dinner that night, and she's been cooking for us ever since Damn good cook, too (He stamps on the floor three times VINNIE comes down the stairs dressed in white Somehow she almost has the appearance of a bride going to her wedding)

VINNIE Good morning, Clare Good morning, boys (The boys and FATHER rise VINNIE takes her bonnet and gloves and lays them on the chair below the fireplace FATHER goes to VINNIE's chair and holds it out for her, glancing at her holiday appearance VINNIE sits)

FATHER Sit down, boys (As FATHER returns to his own chair, he notices that all of the boys are dressed in their Sunday best) Everyone's dressed up this morning What's on the program for this fine day? (VINNIE, who always postpones crises in the hope some miracle will aid her, postpones this one)

VINNIE Well, this afternoon May Lewis's mother is giving a party for everyone in May's dancing class Harlan's going to that

HARLAN I don't want to go, Mamma

VINNIE Why, Harlan, don't you want to go to a party and get ice cream and cake?

HARLAN May Lewis always tries to kiss me (This is greeted with family laughter)

FATHER (genially) When you get a little older, you won't object to girls' wanting to kiss you, will he, Clarence? (MARGARET comes hurrying in)

MARGARET What's wanting?

FATHER Margaret, these kippers are good (MARGARET makes her usual deprecatory gesture toward him) Haven't had kippers for a long time I'm glad you remembered I like them

MARGARET Yes, sir (MARGARET and VINNIE exchange knowing looks MARGARET goes out happy)

FATHER What's got into Margaret this morning? Hot biscuits, too!

VINNIE She knows you're fond of them (The doorbell rings MAGGIE goes to answer it VINNIE stirs nervously in her chair) Who can that be? It can't be the mailman because he's been here

FATHER (with sly humor) Clarence has been getting a good many special deliveries lately Is that business deal going through, Clarence? (The family has a laugh at CLARENCE MAGGIE comes back into the arch with a suit box)

MAGGIE This is for you, Mr Day Where shall I put it?

CLARENCE (hastily) Oh, that's for me, I think Take it upstairs, Maggie

FATHER Wait a minute, Maggie, bring it here Let's see it (CLARENCE takes the box from MAGGIE, who exits He holds it toward his father)

CLARENCE Sec, it's for me, Father—
Clarence Day, Jr

There's something wrong with your reasoning

FATHER Let me look Why, that's from McCreery's and it's marked "Charge " What is it?

VINNIE I'm surprised, Clare, and you're supposed to be so good at figures Why, it's perfectly clear to me

VINNIE It's all right, Clare It's nothing for you to worry about

FATHER Vinnie! They're going to charge me for one thing or the other

FATHER Well, at least I think I should know what's being charged to me What is it?

VINNIE Don't you let them!
(FATHER gets up and throws his napkin on the table)

VINNIE Now, Clare, stop your fussing It's a new suit of clothes for Clarence and it's not costing you a penny

FATHER Well, McCreery's aren't giving away suits and they aren't giving away pug dogs (He walks over to the window in his irritation) Can't you get it through your— (Looking out the window) Oh, God!

FATHER It's marked "Charge fifteen dollars"—it's costing me fifteen dollars And I told Clarence—

VINNIE What is it, Clare? What's wrong?

VINNIE Clare, can't you take my word it isn't costing you a penny?

FATHER I'd like to have you explain why it isn't

FATHER Don't anybody answer the door

VINNIE (*triumphantly*) Because Clarence took the pug dog back and got the suit instead

VINNIE Who is it? Who's coming?

FATHER Of course, and they'll charge me fifteen dollars for the suit

FATHER Those damn women are back!

VINNIE Nonsense, Clare We gave them the pug dog for the suit Don't you see?

WHITNEY What women?

FATHER Then they'll charge me fifteen dollars for the pug dog

FATHER Cora and that little idiot (CLARENCE dashes madly up the stairs clutching the box containing his new suit) They're moving in on us again, bag and baggage! (The doorbell rings) Don't let them in!

VINNIE But, Clare, they can't! We haven't got the pug dog We sent that back

VINNIE Clarence Day, as if we could turn our own relatives away!

FATHER (*bewildered, but not convinced*) Now wait a minute, Vinnie

FATHER Tell them to get back in that cab and drive right on to Ohio If they're extravagant enough to take

cabs when horse cars run right by our door— (MAGGIE crosses the hall to answer the doorbell)

VINNIE Now, Clare—you be quiet and behave yourself They're here and there's nothing you can do about it (She starts toward the hall)

FATHER (shouting after her) Well, why do they always pounce on us without warning?—the damn gypsies!

VINNIE (from the arch) Shhh!—Clare! (Then in her best welcoming tone) Cora! Mary! It's so nice to have you back again

CORA How are you, Vinnie? We've been so worried about you

VINNIE Oh, I'm fine now! (CORA and MARY and VINNIE enter and CORA sweeps right down into the room)

CORA Hello, Harlan! Whitney! Well, Cousin Clare Here we are again! (Kisses FATHER on the cheek He draws back sternly MARY looks quickly around the room for CLARENCE, then greets and is greeted by the other boys) And John! Where's Clarence?

MARY Yes, where is Clarence?

VINNIE John, go find Clarence and tell him that Cora and Mary are here

JOHN Yes, Mother (Goes upstairs)

VINNIE You got here just in time to have breakfast with us

CORA We had breakfast at the depot

VINNIE Well, as a matter of fact, we'd just finished

FATHER (with cold dignity) I haven't finished my breakfast!

VINNIE Well, then sit down, Clare (To CORA and MARY) Margaret gave us kippers this morning and Clare's so fond of kippers Why don't we all sit down? (Indicates the empty places and the girls sit FATHER resumes his chair and breakfast in stony silence MAGGIE has come into the room to await orders) Maggie clear those things away (She indicates the dishes in front of the girls, and MAGGIE removes them FATHER takes a letter from his stack of morning mail and opens it) Clare, don't let your kippers get cold (To CORA) Now—tell us all about Springfield

CORA We had a wonderful month—but tell us about you, Cousin Vinnie You must have had a terrible time

VINNIE Yes, I was pretty sick, but I'm all right again now

CORA What was it?

VINNIE Well, the doctors don't know exactly, but they did say this—that they'd never seen anything like it before, whatever it was

CORA You certainly look well enough now Doesn't she, Clare? (Whatever is in the letter FATHER has been reading comes to him as a shock)

FATHER Oh, God!

VINNIE What's the matter, Clare? What's wrong?

FATHER John! John! (JOHN is seen halfway up the stairs with the girls bags He comes running down the stairs, going to FATHER)

JOHN Yes, Father?

FATHER Have you been going around this town selling medicine?

JOHN (*a little frightened*) Yes, Father

FATHER Dog medicine?

JOHN (*indignantly*) No, Father, not dog medicine!

FATHER It must have been dog medicine!

JOHN It wasn't dog medicine, Father—

FATHER This letter from Mrs Sprague says you sold her a bottle of this medicine and that her little boy gave some of it to their dog and it killed him! Now she wants ten dollars from me for a new dog

JOHN Well, he shouldn't have given it to a dog It's for humans! Why, it's Bartlett's Beneficent Balm—"Made from a secret formula!"

FATHER Have you been going around among our friends and neighbors selling some damned Dr Munyon patent nostrum?

JOHN But it's good medicine, Father I can prove it by Mother

FATHER Vinnie, what do you know about this?

VINNIE Nothing, Clare, but I'm sure that John—

JOHN No, I mean that day Mother—

FATHER That's enough! You're going to every house where you sold a

bottle of that concoction and buy it all back

JOHN (*dismayed*) But it's a dollar a bottle!

FATHER I don't care how much it is How many bottles did you sell?

JOHN A hundred and twenty-eight

FATHER (*roaring*) A hundred and twenty-eight!

VINNIE Clare, I always told you John would make a good business man

FATHER (*calmly*) Young man, I'll give you the money to buy it back—a hundred and twenty-eight dollars And ten more for Mrs Sprague That's a hundred and thirty-eight dollars But it's coming out of your allowance! That means you'll not get another penny until that hundred and thirty-eight dollars is all paid up (*JOHN starts toward the hall, counting on his fingers, then turns and addresses his father in dismay*)

JOHN I'll be twenty-one years old! (*FATHER glares at him JOHN turns and goes on up the stairs, with the bags*)

VINNIE (*persuasively*) Clare, you know you've always encouraged the boys to earn their own money

FATHER Vinnie, I'll handle this (*There is a pause He buries himself in his newspaper*)

CORA (*breaking through the constraint*) Of course, Aunt Judith sent her love to all of you—

VINNIE I haven't seen Judith for years You'd think living so close to

Springfield—maybe I could run up there before the summer's over

CORA Oh, she'll be leaving for Pleasantville any day now Grandpa Ebbetts has been failing very fast and that's why I have to hurry back

VINNIE Hurry back? Well, you and Mary can stay with us a few days at least

CORA No, I hate to break the news to you, Vinnie, but we can't even stay overnight We're leaving on the five o'clock train this afternoon

VINNIE (*disappointed*) Oh, what a pity! (*FATHER lowers the paper*)

FATHER (*heartily*) Well, Cora, it certainly is good to see you again (*To MARY*) Young lady, I think you've been enjoying yourself—you look prettier than ever (*MARY laughs and blushes*)

WHITNEY I'll bet Clarence will think so
(*The doorbell rings MAGGIE crosses to answer it*)

FATHER That can't be another special delivery for Clarence (*To MARY, shyly*) While you were in Springfield our postman was kept pretty busy Sure you girls don't want any breakfast?

MARY No, thank you (*Rises and goes to the arch and stands looking upstairs, watching for CLARENCE*)

CORA Oh, no, thank you, Cousin Clare, we've had our breakfast

FATHER. At least you ought to have a cup of coffee with us Vinnie you

might have thought to order some coffee for the girls

CORA No, no, thank you, Cousin Clare (*MAGGIE appears again in the arch*)

MAGGIE It's the cab, ma'am (*Exits*)

FATHER The cab! What cab?

VINNIE The cab that's to take us to Audubon

FATHER Who's going to Audubon?

VINNIE We all are Cora, the most wonderful thing has happened!

CORA What, Cousin Vinnie?

VINNIE (*happily*) Clare's going to be baptized this morning

FATHER (*not believing his ears*) Vinnie—what are you saying?

VINNIE (*with determination*) I'm saying you're going to be baptized this morning!

FATHER I am not going to be baptized this morning or any other morning!

VINNIE You promised yesterday that as soon as I sent that pug dog back you'd be baptized

FATHER I promised no such thing!

VINNIE You certainly did!

FATHER I never said anything remotely like that!

VINNIE Clarence was right here and heard it You ask him!

FATHER Clarence be damned! I know what I said! I don't remember exactly, but it wasn't that!

VINNIE Well, I remember That's why I ordered the cab!

FATHER (*suddenly remembering*) The cab! Oh, my God, that cab! (*He rises and glares out the window at the cab, then turns back and speaks peremptorily*) Vinnie! You send that right back!

VINNIE I'll do nothing of the kind I'm going to see that you get to Heaven

FATHER I can't go to Heaven in a cab!

VINNIE Well, you can start in a cab! I'm not sure whether they'll ever let you into Heaven or not, but I know they won't unless you're baptized

FATHER They can't keep me out of Heaven on a technicality

VINNIE Clare, stop quibbling! You might as well face it—you've got to make your peace with God

FATHER I never had any trouble with God until you stirred Him up! (*MARY is tired of waiting for CLARENCE and chooses this moment to interrupt*)

MARY Mrs Day?
(*VINNIE answers her quickly, as if expecting MARY to supply her with an added argument*)

VINNIE Yes, Mary?

MARY Where do you suppose Clarence is?

FATHER You keep out of this, young lady! If it hadn't been for you, no one would have known whether I was baptized or not (*MARY breaks into tears*) Damn! Damnation!

VINNIE Harlan! Whitney! Get your Sunday hats (*Calls upstairs*) John! Clarence!
(*HARLAN and WHITNEY start out, but stop as FATHER speaks*)

FATHER (*blazing with new fire*) Vinnie, are you mad? Was it your plan that my own children should witness this indignity?

VINNIE Why, Clare, they'll be proud of you!

FATHER I suppose Harlan is to be my godfather! (*With determination*) Vinnie, it's no use I can't go through with this thing and I won't That's final

VINNIE Why, Clare dear, if you feel that way about it—

FATHER I do!

VINNIE —the children don't have to go
(*JOHN enters*)

JOHN Yes, Mother?
(*FATHER sees JOHN and an avenue of escape opens up*)

FATHER Oh, John! Vinnie, I can't do anything like that this morning I've got to take John down to the office and give him the money to buy back that medicine (*To JOHN*) When I think of you going around this town selling dog medicine!—

JOHN (*insistently*) It wasn't dog medicine, Father

FATHER John, we're starting downtown this minute!

VINNIE You're doing no such thing! You gave me your Sacred Promise that day I almost died—

JOHN Yes, and she would have died if we hadn't given her some of that medicine. That proves it's good medicine!

FATHER (*aghast*) You gave your mother some of that dog medicine!

VINNIE Oh, no, John, you didn't! (*Sinks weakly into the chair below the fireplace*)

JOHN Yes, we did, Mother. We put some in your tea that morning.

FATHER You did what? Without her knowing it? Do you realize you might have killed your mother? You did kill Mrs. Sprague's dog (*After a solemn pause*) John, you've done a very serious thing. I'll have to give considerable thought as to how you're going to be punished for this.

VINNIE But, Clare—

FATHER No, Vinnie. When I think of that day—with the house full of doctors—why, Cora, we even sent for the minister. Why, we might have lost you! (*He goes to Vinnie, really moved, and puts his hand on her shoulder*) It's all right now, Vinnie, thank God. You're well again. But what I went through that afternoon—the way I felt—I'll never forget it.

VINNIE Don't talk that way, Clare. You've forgotten it already.

FATHER What do you mean?

VINNIE That was the day you gave me your Sacred Promise.

FATHER But I wouldn't have promised if I hadn't thought you were dying—and you wouldn't have almost died if John hadn't given you that medicine. Don't you see? The whole thing's illegal!

VINNIE Suppose I had died! It wouldn't make any difference to you. You don't care whether we meet in Heaven or not—you don't care whether you ever see me and the children again. (*She almost succeeds in crying. HARRIAN and WHITNEY go to her in sympathy, putting their arms around her.*)

FATHER (*distressed*) Now, Vinnie, you're not being fair to me.

VINNIE It's all right, Clare. If you don't love us enough there's nothing we can do about it. (*Hurt, FATHER walks away to the other side of the room.*)

FATHER That's got nothing to do with it! I love my family as much as any man. There's nothing within reason I wouldn't do for you, and you know it! All these years I've struggled and worked just to prove—(*He has reached the window and looks out*) There's that damn cab! Vinnie, you're not well enough to go all the way up to Audubon.

VINNIE (*perky*) I'm well enough if we ride.

FATHER But that trip would take all morning. And those cabs cost a dollar an hour.

VINNIE (*with smug complacency*) That's one of their best cabs. That costs two dollars an hour.

(FATHER stares at her a second, horrified—then explodes)

FATHER Then why aren't you ready? Get your hat on! Damn! Damnation! Amen! (Exits for his hat and stick VINNIE is stunned for a moment by this sudden surrender, then hastily puts on her bonnet)

WHITNEY Let's watch them start! Come on, Cousin Cora, let's watch them start!

CORA I wouldn't miss it!
(WHITNEY, HARLAN, and CORA hurry out VINNIE starts, but JOHN stops her in the arch)

JOHN (contritely) Mother, I didn't mean to almost kill you

VINNIE Now, don't you worry about what your father said (Tenderly) It's all right, dear (She kisses him) It worked out fine! (She exits JOHN looks upstairs, then at MARY, who has gone to the window)

JOHN Mary! Here comes Clarence! (JOHN exits MARY sits in FATHER's chair CLARENCE comes down the stairs in his new suit He goes into the room and right to MARY Without saying a word he kneels in front of her They both are starry-eyed FATHER, with hat and stick, comes into the arch on his way out He sees CLARENCE kneeling at MARY's feet)

FATHER Oh, God!
(CLARENCE springs up in embarrassment VINNIE re-enters hurriedly)

VINNIE What's the matter? What's wrong?

CLARENCE Nothing's wrong, Mother — (Then, for want of something to say) Going to the office, Father?

FATHER No! I'm going to be baptized, damn it! (He slams his hat on angrily and stalks out VINNIE gives a triumphant nod and follows him The curtain starts down, and as it falls, CLARENCE again kneels at MARY's feet)

CURTAIN

